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Thesis

THE RELATION OF THE PROPHETS TO THE SOCIAL  
PROBLEMS OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

Submitted by

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"THE RELATION OF THE PROPHETS TO THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE  
EIGHTH CENTURY."

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Very little is known of the social life of the Hebrews prior to their settlement in Canaan; even the date and the actual circumstances of their immigration into Canaan can only be matters of conjecture. The fragmentary and imperfect records given in the Book of Genesis and in the later portion of the Hexateuch regarding them leave us in great uncertainty. Yet the Bible contains unmistakable traces of an earlier period in the Hebrew religion than that recorded in the historical books of the Old Testament. This is brought out very clearly in Joshua 24:14. We only know that the Hebrew nation was produced mainly through the assimilation of two early races. One of these races consisted of primitive tribes or clans which came out of the wilderness of Arabia and settled in the highlands of Canaan. And the other consisted of people who had long lived in Canaan, with their headquarters in walled cities of the lowerlands lying on the trade routes of an ancient oriental civilization. The clans coming out of the wilderness and settling in the highlands are known as the Israelites or the Children of Israel. The other inhabitants of the land who held the fortified cities were known as the



Amorites. While other names have been given to the earlier inhabitants of Canaan, yet the term "Amorite" is the most favored and most accurate.

That the Israelites were nomadic people before entering Canaan, living as shepherds or herdsmen unsettled, and migratory without private property, subsisting for the most part upon flocks and herds, with customs that differed not materially from those of later nomads of Arabia is indisputable. This old social order did not last very long. As the Hebrews with considerable difficulty crowded in and took possession of unoccupied regions east of the Jordan a new social order was established.

The new comers became agriculturists, securing homes of their own in villages and cities, but for the most part still clung to their flocks and continued the several vocations which they followed before crossing the Jordan. As time passed, Israel's whole mode of living underwent a complete transformation; village and city life with their many problems eliminated her longings for roaming over the boundless deserts.

Israel absorbed the domestic customs of her new environment to such a degree that the latter prophets regarded the popular religious worship of their day as practically Canaanitish. Instead of returning to the simple life, she went further and further in the opposite direction, thus



planting the seed of corruption which crystallized in the eighth century B.C.

# I. THE SOCIAL STATUS OF THE HEBREWS PRIOR TO THE EIGHTH CENTURY

## 1. TRIBAL FAMILY LIFE.

The family life of the Hebrew people is exceedingly interesting both from the standpoint of organization and growth as well as from a later development which gave it a political coloring. Their domestic life was not unlike that of most primitive people. Originally, they formed themselves into tribes or groups of tribes, which held similar religious beliefs and customs. As compared with the family life of the twentieth century, it had but little in common. If a son of the tribe got married, he had no extra responsibilities, as one in western society; he simply brought his wife into his father's household, and her name was added along with the other members of the tribe. Each tribe had one ruler, usually, the oldest surviving male of the group. This ruler had the general oversight over all his sons, their wives and their son's families, and the tribe in general. In other details, his duties resembled very much those of Moses; he was judge, high priest and ruler, often possessing power of life and death over the tribe. He was the custodian of the unwritten law, and the administrator of justice.

The Hebrew family expanded in numbers not only by





natural increase but also by adoption or fictitious kinship. As these groups began to expand beyond the bounds of natural relation, and take in outsiders who believed as they, the interest began to change to a marked degree, and took on more of a political coloring instead of a religious coloring. In fact, this marks the very beginning of the corrupt political system with which the eighth century prophets had to contend. It was founded upon deception and falsehood. Originally, tribe was joined to tribe for the mere benefits which would result from group cooperation, and since this worked out successfully it was not long before the spirit of cooperation became the spirit of exploitation. In name it was a family but in reality, the foundation of local government out of which eighth century politics arose. This kind of expansion was not only practiced by Israel only, but by the Troquois Indians as well, who kept continuously expanding until they formed a federation of six tribes, each of which was subdivided into several clans named after various animals.

## 2. DEITIES LOCALIZED AND WORSHIP LIMITED TO SACRED SPOTS.

The dieties of the early Hebrews were in no wise universal, that is, everywhere present, but local, presiding over sacred spots or spots so regarded. The doctrine that





attributes universal presence to God represents the work of later scholars. The idea that the deities were local beings residing over designated spots is amply illustrated in the Old Testament. In Genesis 28:22 we have these words: "This stone which I shall set up shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Genesis 35:7, "And he built there an <sup>a</sup>alter and called the place El-beth-el; because there God was revealed unto him." First Samuel 6:14, "And the cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the car, and offered up the kine for a burnt-offering unto Jehovah." Many such passages are present in the Old Testament:

Judges 6:26	I Samuel 14:35	Genesis 7:7
Genesis 22:14	Genesis 28:18	Exodus 17:15
Judges 6:20	Judges 13:19	

The places where the gods were constantly and visibly present in some prominent natural object became a sanctuary, an appropriate scene for acts of worship. In the Book of Genesis the patriarchs are described as offering sacrifices on sites where a theophany had occurred: Shechem, Beersheba, Mamre, Bethel and Dan, there are common places where the deities were supposed to reside. It was at these places only, that the worshippers could come in contact with



their deities. There they offered sacrifices or gifts; animals were slain beside the sacred stone or similar object while their blood was pored over it or at its base.

Had the localization of deities and worship ended with the primitive Hebrews, the present problem would have but little interest for us. But quite to the contrary, they produced influences which were passed on and perpetuated by subsequent generations and lived until the beginning of the Christian century. The evils resulting therefrom not only made problems against which the eighth century prophets had to battle, but the seventh century prophets as well.

In the first place, the localization of worship separated the worshipper from his deity and made it impossible for him to commune with his god unless he frequented sacred spots. This had a tendency to prevent worshippers from developing to<sup>the</sup> maximum degree of spirituality which could more easily be attained if one could commune with his god at any time and at any place. And in as much as localization of deities and worship were not conducive to the maximum degree of spirituality, they were likewise not conducive to the highest possible ethical life. With this understanding, we can easily see just how it was possible for Israel to be very religious and at the same time socially corrupted. Certainly this kind of worship did not meet with prophetic



favor. Secondly, localization of worship resulted in the over-emphasis of ritual at the price of moral values. Third, it was the localization of worship which fertilized the soil from which it grew: feast days, Sabbath days, and new moons. Through the centuries these primitive views regarding the god's, as well as local worship steadily grew, yet, resulting not in goodness; but the prophets with their keen eyes of justice, seeing the great evils arising from such practices, raised their voices in opposition to the whole primitive system. Instead of the places of worship being sacred spots, Amos brands them in 4:4-5 as being unsacred spots:

"Come go to Bethel and transgress;  
And to Gilgal and multiply transgression.  
And bring your sacrifices every morning and  
your tithes every days; and offer a sacrifice  
of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and  
proclaim free-will-offerings and publish them:  
for this please you, O ye children of Israel."  
(Amos 4:4-5).

"Your new moon, Sabbath, your appointed feasts  
my Soul hateth". (Isaiah 1:14).

The local conception of deities had penetrated so deeply the thought of Israel, that during the exile, even Jehovah was not regarded by some of the Jews as a universal being, that is, every where present. One cannot understand the 137th Psalm unless it is associated with a people whose worship was localized.

The Hebrews just fresh from their little secluded





capital and their vine-clad hills intersected by rushing brooks and mountain torrents must have been well-nigh stupefied by the change in their surroundings. They found themselves a forlorn handful of strangers in the midst of a teeming population; a certain number of them were sold as slaves; some lost to sight in the mazes of the huge city; others were scattered here and there over immense plains watered by endless canals.

While in this condition their minds wondered back to the temple in Jerusalem. At this time those who had them as captives asked of them to sing one of their temple songs, they refused to do so because they were in a strange land--no local temple. No one has brought out this thought better than the author of the 137th Psalm.

"By the rivers of Babylon,  
 There we sat down, yea, we wept,  
 When we remembered Zion.  
 Upon the willows in the midst thereof  
 We hanged up our harps.  
 For there they that led us captive required of us  
 songs,  
 And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,  
 Sing us one of the songs of Zion.  
 How shall we sing Jehovah's song  
 In a foreign land?  
 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
 Let my right hand forget her skill.  
 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,  
 If I remember thee not;  
 If I prefer not Jerusalem  
 Above my chief joy."<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the many unquestioned passages in the

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 137.



Old Testament which brings out the early Hebrews' conception of the deity and their form of worship.

#### a. SACRED TREES.

The worship of sacred trees occupied a very important place in the religious life of the Hebrews. These were some of the many abodes of the Semite's gods. Trees were looked upon as demonic objects and therefore, sacred. In a barren and thirsty soil such trees were the visible embodiment of creative life.

In the whole range of symbolism, no emblem is more wide-spread or has exerted greater influence upon the institution of mankind than the "branch" or tree. Primitive man was impressed by the huge proportions of trees, their age and usefulness of their fruits. Furthermore, the tree was to early man his village meeting-place, and his protection from the fierce heat of the sun or the cold or the rain. We can thus understand how after a time he came to regard them as objects of veneration and worship.

In Arabia sacred trees were thought to possess healing power as well as divine power. It was believed that if the sick slept under such trees they probably would be restored to health. Trees were commonly regarded as sacred until the first Christian century, and in some sections of the world they are so regarded today.



Thus far we have discussed sacred trees only in connection with worship, but there is another side of the picture which is not at all commendable. Just as worship which was connected with sacred altars became corrupted and *developed into* sites for prostitution, so it was with worship connected with sacred trees.

The problem of prostitution with which the prophets dealt did not spring up instantaneously, "our most ancient historical record is believed to be the Books of Moses. According to them, it must be admitted that prostitutes were common among the Jews in the eighteenth century before Christ."<sup>1</sup> The practice of immoral acts between the worshippers at their local sanctuaries was a link in the chain of prostitution which met the condemnation of eighth century prophets. In Amos 2:7-8 we find him looking upon localized worship as mockery: "A Man and his father go unto the same maiden to profane my holy name. And they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge."<sup>2</sup>

When Hosea wrote 4:13 he was conscious of earlier corruptions in worship: "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars, and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good:

<sup>1</sup>Sanger, W.V., "History of Prostitution", p.35.  
<sup>2</sup>Amos 2:7-8.





therefore your daughters play the harlot, and your brides commit adultery."<sup>1</sup>

In as much as sacred trees and sacred altars marked spots of worship, they also represented spots of prostitution, but it was sacred, admitting worshippers only.

### 3. HUMAN SACRIFICE.

Sacrifice is a very ancient and universal practice among primitive people. With the Hebrews as with the whole ancient world, it had a definite and unique place in worship. The belief that the cultus goes back to pre-mosaic usage is unquestionably more natural than the belief that it is the main element of the Sinaitic legislation.

Even though sacrifices formed the main part of the Hebrew worship, yet, they should be regarded as mere outward tokens of gratitude and devotion to a supreme being, rather than substitutes for righteousness. According to Knudson, this view of sacrifice is within the bounds of rational and ethical worship, and was apparently the attitude taken by the early literary prophets. "But this was not the attitude taken by the Hebrews in general toward sacrifices. They looked upon these outward rites as an essential element in the worship of Yahweh."<sup>2</sup>

It is believed that the Hebrews shared in the prim-

<sup>1</sup>Hosea 4:13.

<sup>2</sup>Knudson, Albert C., "Religious Teachings of the Old Testament" p.102.





itive belief that the deity himself actually partook of the sacrificial offering, deriving a kind of physical satisfaction from it. This idea is clearly conveyed in Genesis 8:12: "And Jehovah smelled the sweet savor; and Jehovah said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake-----Neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done." However, the principal conception of sacrifice was that it was the necessary bond which linked or united a deity to his tribe. Thus we find that all through the Old Testament that lambs, oxen, and bulls were sacrificed upon the sacred altars to the deities by the Hebrews for wrongs which they committed and for the assurance of the deity's presence. The Hebrews also offered sacrifices to their deities when they thought that they were angry. Storms, pestilence and drought were the manifestations of their anger. In order to have these so-called evils of nature expelled, they not only sacrificed lower animals, but human beings as well.

Human sacrifice did not have its beginning with the Hebrews, although it was practiced by them. That it had a more primitive origin may be gathered from the expressed prohibition of it in the Mosaic law, and from the ancient tradition embodied in the story of the offering of Isaac. In Leviticus 18:21 we have these words: "And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to set them apart to Molech, neither shall



thou profane the name of thy God;" Deuteronomy 12:31 - "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination of Jehovah, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods." Human sacrifice evidently prevailed among the heathen neighbors of Israel, probably, the Moabites. Second Kings 3:27 has been definitely pointed out in support of the view that such sacrifice was practiced among the Moabites. ✓

The practice of human sacrifice during the pre-mosaic period and sacrifice in general are not at all isolated practices from superficial offerings which were common during the eighth century B.C. and to a limited degree in the present century. These early worshippers were primarily concerned about winning the favor of their gods, rather than moral and spiritual development for themselves. Therefore, if mere offerings were the prerequisites for rightful relationship to the deities, then it is very obvious how it was possible for Israel to be very religious and at the same time practice injustice. However, this conception of religion did not find favor with eighth century prophets. They believed in sacrifices, but that kind which is spoken of in Psalm 51:17: "a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart." Other sacrifices the prophets condemned--Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 1:11-17; Hosea 6:4-6.



The social problems which confronted the eighth century prophets are by no means independent of Mosaic and pre-mosaic problems, but rather integral parts which had their beginning with Hebrew nomads and the early Canaanites. As time passed, these primitive problems were intensified and perpetuated from generation to generation until at last they became great enemies to prophetic progress.

In the previous topics we saw how excess ritual, sacrifice, and even sacred prostitution had their origin in the pre-mosaic period, but we failed to consider unjust land practices.

With the Hebrews, land ownership was regarded as evil. Land was recognized as a gift from God and was not to be sold, (Lev. 25:23) this method kept people from being neither rich nor poor. However, as man became more civilized the enlightened minority began the practice of buying and selling land. Through the ages, the mind of the minority became the mind of the majority; so much so that even before the eighth century B.C., the old democratic spirit had been almost completely displaced by a spirit of selfishness and self-centeredness. And by the time of the prophets, the thirst for land and land monopoly was so great that a large part of their message was devoted to problems arising from the soil.---Hosea 5:10; Isaiah 5:8.





With this brief survey, we are justified in saying that the social problems of the eighth century B.C. had their origin, for the most part, in pre-Mosaic and Mosaic periods.

## PART II.

### II HERALDS OF ISRAELITISH DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. MOSES

The matchless progress which the Hebrews made in their early domestic and religious life, has given rise to the question as to what this may be attributed; and we find that uniform tradition of the Hebrews points to Moses, the one commanding personality as the instrument through which the change was brought about.

#### A. TRIBES ORGANIZED INTO A NATIONAL UNITY

We are accustomed to think of Moses as a law-giver and author; especially commissioned by God to be the liberator of his fellow-tribesmen; but his chief glory is rather that he was the first and greatest prophet of the Old Testament dispensation. That Moses was a prophet is brought out in Hosea 12:13. "And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel out of



the land of Egypt; and by a prophet was he preserved." Moses did two things: (1) He organized the heterogeneous elements that came forth from Egypt into a national unity. (2) He gave to this unity a practical monotheism. In this we see the twofold activity common to all the prophets: national and religious, with the emphasis upon the latter, for the basis of the national union was the recognition of Jehovah as the one God of Israel. Certainly in the beginning Moses had to do some things which at a later time were assigned to separate officials. In reality Moses filled a fourfold office: (1) He was a prophet; (2) a priest; (3) a law-giver; (4) a political leader. As such he laid the foundation for the political, social, and religious life of the Hebrews.

The question has been raised as to whether Israel is a debtor to Egypt or Midian, for some of its distinctive features, since Moses was traditionally connected with both countries? So far nothing definitely has been discovered through Moses' attitude which point in either direction. Scholars rather favor the assumption that the religion taught by Moses was hammered out on the anvil of his own experience. Doubtless he found in the ancestral beliefs of the Hebrews the necessary basis for his teaching.

In the modern sense of the term, we may say, that Moses was divinely chosen, and inspired, and prepared for his task, and went to Israel with an authoritative message from



the God of their fathers.

b. YAHWEH SUBSTITUTED FOR LOCAL DEITIES.

The conception of the Yahweh has never been unified. In the early days of Moses Yahweh was as large as the tribe and no larger; When Israel was connected with the wilderness, Yahweh was also connected with the wilderness. As time passed, it became popular to suppose that Yahweh had his abode in Mount Sinai, or some other Mount. This conception is clearly illustrated in I Kings 19:8, Exodus 5:3, 17:14, Judges 5:4-5; Deuteronomy 33:2; Numbers 21:14; "The mountain quaked at the presence of the Lord, even yon Sinai at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel".--Judges 5:3. "And he arose---and spent forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God."--I Kings 19:8.

At this period of Israel's development she had not the slightest conception of a universal deity, although her many deities were replaced by the one superior being, Yahweh.

When Moses became Israel's leader he did not deny the existence of other Gods, but he said "for Israel there is but one God." A single divine name "Yahweh" was proclaimed as the watchword of the religion which he taught. "For Israel, Yahweh was he; all and all. This name meant two things to Israel: (1) he who creates, causes to be, or brings things to pass; (2) he will be; that is, the eternal or constant being."





who will progressively manifest himself in future history as Israel's creator and redeemer."<sup>1</sup>

"The name was intended to express not what God is in himself, but rather what He was in relation to Israel - a personal being, willing to enter into covenant with man, and reveal himself progressively as occasion might demand; a being self-existent and faithful in the fulfilling of his purpose of Grace; above all else, He is a God of righteousness, a defender of the cause of the poor and helpless, the chastiser of falsity, cruelty, and oppression."<sup>2</sup>

Moses told Israel, for all these favors, Yahweh required of his chosen people the observance of moral law, and undivided allegiance to Him; and that Yahweh would punish moral transgressors both as a nation and individuals.

There is a close similarity between the teachings of Moses and those of the eighth century prophets. Moses discouraged the foreign worship which Israel had adopted, and the prophets discouraged the superficial worship of the temples and high places. Moses pled with Israel for true devotion to Yahweh, and the prophets pled for true devotion to Jehovah. Moses taught Israel the true nature of Yahweh, and the prophets taught the true nature of Jehovah. Moreover, many of the things taught by the prophets were previously emphasized by Moses.

<sup>1</sup>Ottley, R.L., "The Religion of Israel" p.30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. "The Religion of Israel" p.30.



## 2. JOSHUA.

After the death of Moses the life of Israel underwent a complete revolution. Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel crossed the Jordan, entered the promised land, fought many a battle, conquered the Canaanites, and also settled in Canaan. The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites was of crucial importance in the development of Israel; both from a religious as well as from a national point of view. As a result of the conquest, Israel was changed from a nomadic to an agricultural people.

One of the important things to be noticed regarding this conquest is that the Canaanites finally were victorious. It is true that Israel conquered physically, but in turn the Canaanites conquered culturally. In fact, the religion of Canaan penetrated so deeply into that of Israel that the later prophets regarded the popular worship of their day as practically Canaanitish. Judging from the Book of Joshua, the pure worship only endured or lasted through the days of Joshua and the days of the elders that outlived Joshua who knew all the work of the Lord. (Joshua 24:29-31)

"The period following the death of Joshua was for the Israelites one of transition. Their nomadic habits were abandoned, and they gradually acquired those of a settled nation. The territory occupied was a narrow one, and intercommunication must have been very difficult. The tribal spirits tended to increase, and to obliterate those national feelings which actuated Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Foakes-Jackson, F. J., "Biblical History of the Hebrew People to the Christian Era." p. 104.



The Hebrews did not consciously abandon their allegiance to Jehovah, but being in an agricultural section of Palestine they, of necessity, adopted and practiced those religious observances in honor of the Canaanite's deities of the localities which were considered indispensable to successful farming (Deuteronomy 16:9-17). For a short while after the conquest the Hebrews clung to their ancestral faith in Yahweh but gradually they transferred the attributes of Baal to Him. The idea slowly tended to prevail that Yahweh had taken up His abode in Canaan, and that He was the author of its fertility, the giver of rain and fruitful seasons. Such a conception gained strength in proportion as the Hebrews became habituated to agricultural pursuits. It was at this point that the Hebrew religion took on syncretistic elements; Yahweh was identified with Baal, as a natural result from the social fusion of the two nationalities; and the Hebrews appropriated the Canaanitish sanctuaries with their adjuncts, the pillars, the altars, and the sacred poles. Thus in every part of the land there existed some shrine at which Yahweh could be approached, and worshipped as the true Baal of the new territory. It should also be noticed that in as much as the Hebrews adopted Canaanitish religious customs, they also adopted their habit of drinking through the wine industry. Therefore when the prophets preached against drunkenness and drinking (Amos 9:13, Hosea 4:11, 7:5, Isaiah 5:11, 28:1-7), they referred to any evil





which had its beginning in Canaan many centuries before.

The conquest of Palestine by the Hebrews had, beyond doubt great effects upon them. The religion of Yahweh degenerated into a mere nature-cult, and became polluted with the coarse and foul rites which had deeply corrupted the worship of the Canaanites. On the other hand we must agree with Foakes-Jackson that there is another side of the picture:

"Without the change from a nomadic state to the settled life of an agricultural community the Hebrews could not have advanced to any higher stage in culture nor have made any real religious progress."<sup>1</sup>

During the period of transition, which Israel underwent not every one forgot the moral precepts of Yahweh; His virtues as well as the religion of the Mosaic age were cherished by an inner circle of faithful Israelites. In a final word, we may conclude that the Hebrews were on the whole, a vigorous, prosperous, liberty-loving people. This view is supported by many passages throughout the Old Testament. The Hebrews even sanctified transgressions by paying the priest for indulgences; reference to this practice is given in the following books: Exodus, 21:30; I Samuel 6:3; II Kings 12:16; Amos 2:8; Hosea 4:8 - "They feed on the sin of my people, and set their heart on their iniquity." From the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 105.



above passages it is clearly demonstrated that the evils which confronted the prophets had their origin in pre-Mosaic and Mosaic periods.

The conquest of Palestine had a very great significance for the Hebrews from an economic point of view,

but ethically and morally, it had no immediate value in the development of the Hebrew people.

### 3. DEBORAH.

During the period of the judges, Israel had no great leaders. The records of this period mention only two persons as occupying the prophetic office: Deborah and an unknown prophet (Judges 4:4; 6:8.) Deborah was the wife of Lapidoth, and one of the few women who functioned as a religious leader of Israel. She cast her lot with Israel during the time of the Canaanite's crisis.

The occasion which called forth Deborah to action had its roots anchored in a basic economic problem. The Hebrews, who were nomadic peoples, had migrated from the desert regions of Mesopotamia in such numbers and had taken possession of so much Canaanitish territory that they were fast becoming a menace to the Canaanites. In order to check their advancement the Canaanites were restricting their expansion and oppressing them from every angle. At



this point Deborah championed Israel's cause and used all of her influence in fighting for Israel's freedom. Again we see that oppression was a problem long before the eighth century B.C., although, practiced by the Canaanites and grew worse as time passed. During this crisis evidently, patriotic songs of various nature were sung. This is brought out in the words of J. M. P. Smith, - "The songs not only sounded the praises of the loyal Israelites who risked their lives and property by joining in the effort for freedom, but it also called down curses upon those who should have responded to the call for aid and did not."<sup>1</sup>

Deborah has gone down in history as the prophetess who during the eleventh century B.C., began an open struggle against the Canaanites for Israel's freedom. (1) She demanded for this people political independence; (2) economic liberty to expand beyond partial and designated limits or sections insufficient to accommodate their growing population. During the struggle she kept faith in Yahweh and believed that He was able to obtain for His people all that they needed.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, J.M.P., "The Prophets and Their Times" p. 14.





## 4. SAMUEL.

Samuel was in all probability a Nazirite (I Samuel 1:2) and grew to manhood at the central sanctuary of Shiloh. The Nazirites were regarded by the prophets as a class of men specially raised up by Yahweh to keep alive in Israel the true knowledge of His will. (Amos 2:2) The activities of Samuel fell in the latter half of the eleventh century B.C. toward the close of the period of the judges and the beginning of the monarchy. Samuel's first service to Israel was in the midst of a great crisis, somewhat similar to that which faced Deborah, the prophetess, whom he succeeded. Although when he became Israel's leader danger from the Canaanites was probably a thing of the past, yet another foe in the person of the Philistines, had grown up in their stead. The Philistines were an aggressive people, and rapidly made for themselves a large place in Palestine. Apparently, the things for which Deborah struggled so violently: political independence; and economic liberty, were threatened; and Israel was in a fair way of being reduced to vassalage. We read in I Samuel 13:19-20 that the Philistines had so oppressed Israel that the trade of the smith had been taken from them for fear that they would make implements of war. There can be no doubt that I Samuel 13:19-20 refers to the condition of Israel at the beginning of



Samuel's leadership: "Now there was no smith found through all the land of Israel; for the Philistines said: Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears; but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his plow-share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock."

This was a serious crisis that confronted the Israelites—not a religious crisis, but a crisis which threatened Israel's livelihood. Israel was too progressive for the Philistines.

At this state of Israel's trouble not even a seer could predict her fate. Even Samuel was uncertain as to Israel's future. But after pondering over her condition, he reached the conclusion that the only salvation for Israel lay in the unification of the different tribes of Canaan under a single ruler and the organization of their resistance to Philistine oppression. In this matter, according to I Samuel 9:1-10:16, Samuel shared and represented the universal desire for a monarchy. He regarded the Kingdom as Yahweh's gift to Israel. (I Samuel 8:7) Samuel was like Deborah, in that she saw no conflict between the sword and the will of Yahweh, and he saw no inconsistency between the monarchy and the rule of Yahweh. Therefore, Samuel holds a place of honor in Israel's history as the virtual founder of the monarchy. His main purpose for so doing was to cope with the Philistines, who were literally enslaving his people and taking possession



of their territory. This unsocial practice did not end even after the monarchy was founded, but continued, exploiting the weak and needy until it was condemned by the eighth century prophets. From this we see that the problem of exploitation which faced the prophets had its beginning in a far more ancient period.

#### SUMMARY.

The circumstances under which Israel lived during the Mosaic period and the period of the judges give us a better understanding of the Hebrew people in general, and the key to the social problems of the eighth century B.C.. At the outset it is safe to say that the problems which faced the prophets were very definitely connected with the economic problems of the period of the judges. It was not until the Israelites had settled in Canaan and began competing with the Canaanites from an economic point of view <sup>that</sup> ~~did~~ <sup>a</sup> oppression begin. On the other hand, ~~up~~ until the time when Israel settled in Canaan, it was almost impossible to test her ~~loyalty~~ to Yahweh, (due to the nomadic life which she lived) but after settling in Canaan we find that the Israelites, on the whole, were liberty-loving people, and adopted many of the customs, of her own accord, from her neighbors, which in time brought prophetic condemnation. ✓





Therefore, economic competition on the one hand, and <sup>the</sup> adoption of Canaanitish customs on the other, gave rise to the problems which brought about both the political and religious problems which lived until the eighth century B.C.

### PART III.

## III THE PERIOD OF THE KINGS AND THEIR CORRUPTIONS

### 1. SAUL'S ELECTION

After the inauguration of the monarchy, Israel became subject to a new leadership under the title of kings. The first person to ascend the throne as king over Israel was Saul. The circumstances of his election to the kingship are by no means clear. There are two accounts: one of which (I Samuel 9:1, 10:16) describes the anointing of Saul by Samuel in obedience to a divine command or insight.

In the second account of Saul's election (I Samuel 10:17-27) we find that Samuel is a judge, who in his old age has appointed his sons judges after him. The elders of Israel, being dissatisfied with them and desiring to have a monarchy like the surrounding nations, asked Samuel to appoint them a king. He regards this demand as a most serious offense,



religiously, equivalent to a rejection of the kingship of Jehovah; politically a serious blunder, for which the people will have to pay dearly. Jehovah's anger over the demand is demonstrated by thunder and rain in harvest time, and the destruction of Israel is averted only by the intercession of Samuel. The method employed (according to I Samuel 10;17-27) in the choice of the king is the lot; and it falls miraculously upon Saul, who is then made king; and Samuel provides the people with a constitution of the monarchy. The election is supposed to have taken place at a formal assembly of the people held at Mizpah. Regarding the second account Peritz says the following:

"The second account bears all the characteristics of the Deuteronomic portion of the book of Judges: it is written from the later point of view of theocracy and out of the experience of the religious and political evils that the kingship had brought with it; and it fits in with the scheme of the 'judges' that underlies the 'framework' of the book of Judges, in which evidently Eli and Samuel were included. In the same vein are the stories of the childhood and call of Samuel (I Samuel 1-4:1a)...They are written with reference to religious instruction and recognize and emphasize the divine elements in history."<sup>1</sup>

In the light of these two accounts of Saul's election to the kingship, we must suppose either that tradition varied respecting the mode of Saul's appointment, or that the private act of Samuel was afterwards ratified by popular election. However, the essential point to be remembered is that through the founding of the monarchy Samuel hoped to overcome Philistine oppression and to have Israel return to

<sup>1</sup>Peritz, T. J., "Old Testament History" p. 125.



the faith of the fathers.

#### a PERSONAL AMBITION AND DETHRONEMENT

There seems to be much obscurity and misunderstanding connected with the reign of Saul; however, that his conduct was met with Samuel's disapproval is free from difficulty.

There are two accounts of Samuel's bitterness toward Saul, and both imply that Saul was wanting in the scrupulous obedience expected to be rendered from one who claimed, and was generally recognized, to be the interpreter of the Divine Will.

According to tradition, at the beginning of Saul's reign apparently, everything went well, but it was not long before he cast his lot with the political and military party rather than with the representatives of Yahweh. Samuel considered Saul's action as evidence that he was not willing to abide by the policy of the religious party; he also regarded Saul as a dangerous character for the future of the religion of his fathers. Therefore, Samuel broke with Saul, and David who is said to have been "a man after God's own heart", who might be expected to follow the prophetic leadership was anointed king.

A careful examination of the Biblical accounts of the conflict between Samuel and Saul reveals the fact that:





"In First Samuel Chapter 13, Saul is repudiated by Samuel for a reason that does not clearly appear. In First Samuel, chapter 15, the rejection is based upon the fact that Saul has not carried out faithfully the command of Yahweh to exterminate the Amalekites. The explanation of the rejection of Saul given in First Samuel 15:7b--15a is that Saul, after mustering his forces for an attack upon the Philistines grew impatient over Samuel's failure to keep his appointment, and so proceeded to offer the sacrifices necessary before launching battle against the foe without waiting longer for the delinquent prophet. And at this junction Samuel appeared and proceeded to read Saul out of the kingship."<sup>1</sup>

The latter reason given for Saul's rejection is not so well accepted. If the mere fact that Saul had sacrificed with his own hands constituted his offense then he must have written very late; for layment are represented as offering sacrifice without office. This was done by David, Solomon and Elijah. "There was no law against the offering of sacrifice by a layman until the adoption of the Deuteronomic code in the days of King Josiah."<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the wide variations of the two accounts of Saul's corruptions, all evidence points to the fact that the history of the rupture between Saul and Samuel is quite obscure; for in neither of the conflicting accounts preserved, is there freedom from difficulty. But that Saul was not interested in the moral and spiritual development of the monarchy is certain.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, J.M.P., "The Prophets and Their Times" p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.20.



## 2. THE ANOINTMENT OF DAVID AS KING

The anointment of David as king of Israel ~~was~~ met with popular favor. According to the narratives there were three different tribes gathered at Hebron to make David king and to attend the three days feast which followed. ✓

Except for the important records of events of David's family, our knowledge of his reign is fragmentary and incomplete. Our history is not arranged in a strictly chronological order, and the time and order of events must be to some extent a matter of conjecture. Despite the fragmentary history connected with David, there can be no doubt that the Philistines were the first important foe to greet him after his national recognition.

The task imposed upon David as a king was that of freeing the nation from the domination of the Philistines. If one can rely on the narratives regarding the reign of Saul, this task was also assigned to him but he failed to complete it. When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they at once invaded the country. David attempted to check their invasion, but not being prepared at this time to meet them, was defeated. The Philistines penetrated to the heart of the country and occupied Bethlehem and the valley of Rephaim, probably, between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. However, after David made the



necessary preparations to compete with the Philistines, from this point on, he was victorious almost exclusively in every battle.

David not only completed the military enterprise which Saul left unfinished, but gave the Hebrews a capital which became a true spiritual metropolis as well as a political center. In developing the religious side of the kingdom, David resolved to bring up to Jerusalem the sacred ark, which had for many years been left at Kiriath-Jearim (I Samuel 7:1, 2 Samuel 6:2, Jos. 15:9-60, I Ch. 13:6). David went with a long list of Israelites. The ark was drawn in a new cart, accompanied by two of its attendants: Uzziah and Ahio while David and his subjects marched behind by the music.

While transferring the ark, one of its supporters fell dead; this frightened David very much, therefore, he gave orders for it to be placed in the home of Obed-edom, who was a Philistine Mercenary. Three months later David resumed his task. This time it was carried into the city of David.





### a. CHARACTER AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DAVID

The character of David is exceedingly complex. To form an opinion which will be generally accepted is impossible.

(The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).  
 "Regarding David's character we have two accounts: On one hand he is extolled as a saint, and yet few men have committed worse crimes. The character of David must remain, like that of everyone, an insoluble enigma.---There are several sides of David's nature in regard to which there cannot be two opinions.

Perhaps the feature of his character which stands out most prominently in his earlier years, at any rate, is his boundless physical courage. He never shirked danger (I Samuel 17:28-33) and delighted in hairbreadth escapes. (26:6) Like most Semites, he was fond of gambling and liked to take risks.---Whether David had moral courage to an equal degree is very doubtful."

Many facts regarding David's character may be obscure but this is not the case with his accomplishments. There is almost a oneness of opinion among Old Testament scholars today that David achieved more for Israel than either his predecessors or successors, and was the greatest king that Israel ever had.

David was the founder of the national monarchy, he united the tribes under one ruler, freed them from subjection to their enemies, established a capital for the nation, organized the state, extended its boundaries to the extremest limites, and made Israel a power to be reckoned with. David was a great statesman and soldier. He sustained his reputation of being a mighty man of valor and a



man of war; he was very tactful in dealing with both his friends and enemies and revealed a broad outlook in planning for the nation. David was both lovable and loving. His most valiant soldiers would risk their lives to please him; and he was capable of returning the affection.

Judging from II Samuel 3:9, 18; 5:2; 7:5, David was the center of high prophetic hopes; prophets and priests instinctively rallied to his side. He was greatly idealized through the ages to such a degree that many Psalms have been attributed to him which did not at all come from his pen. They do not reflect the real character and coloring of David.

### 3. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

The reign of David closed about 969 or 970 B.C. and his successor, Solomon ascended the throne. Solomon reigned from 970 to 930 B.C. When he became ruler of the kingdom it is said to have extended from the borders of Egypt to the river Euphrates, its northern boundary being Kadesh on the Orontes, a city which during the reign of David and Solomon seemed to have belonged to the Hittites. The condition of the surrounding nations was not such as to hinder the growth and expansion of an Israelitish kingdom. Owing to certain weakness in the Assyrian Empire, it was not able to adopt an aggressive policy.

During the early part of Solomon's reign he recog-



nized the danger to which his widely extended kingdom was subject; therefore, he turned his attention to the task of defending his possessions in Palestine. He fortified Jerusalem and increased the number of his army, yet through all of this the desolation of the Israelitish empire began even before his death. The Assyrian kingdom of Damascus regained its strength; and Edom, which David subdued at the terrible cost of all its males, revolted under Hadad, one of the royal line who as a child escaped to Egypt and there married an Egyptian princess, sister of the queen. "As compared with David, Solomon was less of a warrior and more inclined to peaceful pursuits. But he was compelled to carry on military expeditions which did not bring him success."<sup>1</sup> Due to the building program which Solomon had mapped out, he was in great need of money; and defeats in battles made the need still greater. Although Solomon had many ways of raising money for his building program, yet the needs were too great for the amount raised. In short, out of the most clearly distinguishable features of the reign of Solomon was the development of the material aspects of the kingdom. He enlarged Israel's circle of foreign alliances and he himself married a daughter of the king of Egypt, which brought him the city of Gezer. He was the first to inaugurate a national

<sup>1</sup>Peritz, I. J., "Old Testament History" p. 150.





system for the collecting of revenue, by dividing the country into twelve districts, exempting Judah and appointing over each an officer whose duty it was to provide his court with provisions for a month in the year. To carry out his building program he forced his subjects to service, employing in a large measure the surviving Canaanites.

#### a. SOLOMON'S SUBJECTS

That Solomon's reign was featured by material success is a matter of universal knowledge, and even though his subjects were benefitted by prosperity, yet, on the whole, they were not happy. Solomon's wealth, splendor and wisdom have become proverbial expressions, but when viewed in the light of highest ideals they remind us that they were founded on an Oriental despotism, contrary to the principles of universal freedom and democracy. His wealth was purchased by enslaving his subjects. Solomon had much wisdom, yet it failed to enable him to make his people happy and content. He sowed the seed of revolt which bore fruit as soon as he was removed by death.

The period between the founding of the monarchy and the death of Solomon brought far-reaching changes in the social life of Israel. Her experiences are given in I Samuel 8:11-17:

"This will be the manner of king that shall rule

The first of these is the fact that the  
theoretical model of the system is  
based on the assumption that the  
system is in a steady state. This  
assumption is not valid for the  
system under consideration, and  
the results of the model are  
therefore not applicable.

The second of these is the fact that  
the model is based on the assumption  
that the system is linear. This  
assumption is not valid for the  
system under consideration, and  
the results of the model are  
therefore not applicable.

The third of these is the fact that  
the model is based on the assumption  
that the system is time-invariant.  
This assumption is not valid for  
the system under consideration,  
and the results of the model are  
therefore not applicable.

The fourth of these is the fact that  
the model is based on the assumption  
that the system is deterministic.  
This assumption is not valid for  
the system under consideration,  
and the results of the model are  
therefore not applicable.

The fifth of these is the fact that  
the model is based on the assumption  
that the system is continuous.

over you: he will take your sons and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties and he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take your men-servants and your maid-servants and your goodliest young men and your asses, and put them to his work, and he will take the tenth of your flocks; and ye shall be his servants." (I Samuel 8:11-17)

Solomon's reign was one out of which the rich were greatly benefited but the poor were not. This fact is brought out more clearly in the words of Foakes-Jackson: "Under Solomon's leadership, the poor people had to bear the burden of the Kingdom; while the wealthy class was growing richer, the poor class became poorer."<sup>1</sup> Solomon died before the great disruption of the Israelitish monarchy; although by his extravagance and oppression he had prepared for the catastrophe. He left behind him much that was permanent.

#### b. RELIGIOUS APOSTASY

As Solomon neared the close of his reign, apparently things went from bad to worse. The crowning evidence of his essential disruption is found in his attitude toward religion. In the book of Kings, Solomon's sin is twofold: he

<sup>1</sup>Foakes-Jackson, F. J., "The Biblical History of the Hebrews to the Christian Era." p.207.



intermarried with heathens; and in consequence his wives turned away his heart in his old age, and he was led by them into idolatry. (I Kings 11:4)

"An abiding witness of his apostasy, were the sanctuaries to Moloch and Chemosh erected on the Mount that is before Jerusalem, which were not destroyed until the days of Josiah (II Kings 23:13). After the conquest, Jehovah took on many of the qualities of the Canaanite Baal, even at times his name; and he was worshipped with many of the old rites that clung to the Canaanite high places. But in essentials Jehovah still bore a likeness to the God of Moses, and he still claimed first place in the affections of Israel. But on the other hand Solomon openly placed by the side of Jehovah, even in the courts of his new Jehovah's temple, the many heathen gods of his foreign wives, gods of the nation whom the great David had conquered; gods who were pleased with forms of worship that outraged the moral sense of the Hebrews."<sup>1</sup>

To understand how far Solomon was guilty of religious apostasy it is necessary to understand Israel's religious status before the reign of Solomon. There are three stages in Israel's development: (1) as a wandering tribe driving their cattle from pasture to pasture the Israelites were addicted to a very simple worship of Jehovah, the national God. (2) On settling in Canaan, Israel became an agricultural nation and adopted many of the religious customs and beliefs of the natives of Palestine. However, Solomon represented neither the ancient Israelitish nomad, nor the more modern settler in Canaan; Israel under Solomon underwent its third change.

Evidence points to the fact that Solomon's background had much to do with the course of his reign.

<sup>1</sup>Kent, C. F. and Bailey, A. E., "Hist. of the Hebrew Commonwealth" p. 136.





According to the early narratives, Solomon was reared in an Oriental court and was devoted to foreign luxury and refinement; he honored Jehovah by building a superb temple modeled on the shrines of other nations. "Tyrians"—not Israelites designed and erected it. Under him Israel had a glimpse of civilization greater than they had ever enjoyed, and it was but natural that they should try to emulate other nations.

In analysing Solomon's motive for honoring foreign gods, Bailey and Kent think that he, in his wisdom, may have felt that it was a necessary state policy to strengthen his foreign alliances. Solomon allowed his zeal for foreign usages to extend, seemingly, farther than his zeal for national usages. This was a means of breaking down the barriers by which Israel was separated from the rest of the world as well as a state policy. At any rate, whatever his motive may have been for paying such homage to the heathen gods of his wives, never-the-less, it did not meet the approval of the prophetic class. In the words of Knudson, "Ahijah and Shemaiah are of interest in that they furnish evidence of the prophetic dissatisfaction with Solomon's reign despite all its pomp and power. Better they felt, a divided and weaker kingdom than one that was tyrannical and permeated with heathen influences."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Knudson, Albert C., "Prophetic Movement in Israel" p.35.



#### 4. DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Shortly after the death of Solomon, his son, Rehoboam was quick to have himself proclaimed king by his faithful friends in Jerusalem, and hoped to have all Israel approve his nomination. But the northern tribes had suffered severely under his father's administration, and they were not willing to approve Rehoboam as their king unless he was willing to return to the less oppressive policy similar to that of David or Saul. Thus they demanded a statement from the prospective king as to whether he would lighten the burden under which his father, Solomon worked them. Rehoboam saw that they were determined, and therefore, he took three days to consider their grievances. During this period Rehoboam was counselled by both old men and young men. The old men realized the danger that might arise and advised a moderation of his father's policy; but the young men seeing no dangers that might arise bade him to assert his authority. In his ignorance, the latter counsel seemed to have been the better for Rehoboam, moreover, at the end of the three days he returned an autocratic answer: "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Rehoboam assumed his father's manner and ordered Adoniram, as overseer of the labor gangs, to set the people to work. According to the narratives, the people stoned the



the overseer to death and Rehoboam not knowing what was going to happen next, fled. Then the ten northern tribes elected Jeroboam head of the northern state, which took the name Israel.

The prophets were heartily in favor of a divided kingdom because they were convinced that a continuation of Solomon's policy would result in the loss of true religion; and they were willing to sacrifice the state, if only the religion of Jehovah could be saved.

From this point, Old Testament history has to deal with two Hebrew Kingdoms: (1) the kingdom of Judah, or the Southern Kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem; (2) and the Kingdom of Israel, or the Northern Kingdom, with its capital at Samaria.

#### a. THE CULT OF THE TYRIAN BAAL

The hopes of the prophets were not fully realized, for the kings of the northern kingdom were by no means all ardent worshipers of Jehovah. In name He continued to be the God of Israel, but the conduct of the kings, who found ready imitators among the people, was not such as to allay the fears of the zealous Jehovah prophets. As a result, conflict between the political and religious parties broke out afresh, which reached their culmination in the days of





Ahab. Ahab's alliance with Jezebel, (the daughter of Eth-baal of Tyre), seemingly, turned his attention away from the worship of Jehovah. And since the king took little interest in the worship of Jehovah, Jezebel soon gained many concessions from him which gave a prominent place to her god Baal. The great mass of people, seeing the indifference of the king, followed the examples of Jezebel who represented to them by her enthusiasm and zeal, the policy of the court.

#### b. FALSE PROPHETS

Between the division of the kingdom and the time of Amos (937-750 B.C.), the first literary prophet, the worship of Baal gradually gripped the entire northern kingdom. Not only was Baal worshipped by the mass of the people, but by a prophetic group as well, known as false prophets. They seemed to have thought that their personal interests demanded loyalty to the ruling power. Consequently, they delivered such messages as would secure their selfish ends.

"These prophets were commonly opposed to the canonical prophets, but this does not mean that they embraced all of the lower rank of prophets. Many of the rank and file of the prophetic order were true prophets of Jehovah, and were ready to seal with their blood their loyalty to the truth. (II Kings 9:7; 21:10-16; Jer. 26:20-23). As over against these, however, there were large numbers who fell under the baneful influences of professionalism, divining for money, and still others who unconsciously yielded to the dominant national spirit allowing themselves to be blinded by the hopes and wishes of the people." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Knudson, Albert C., "Beacon Lights of Prophecy", p. 10



Prophets of this type approved the policy of the court and raised not their voices when they saw the worship of other deities by the side of Jehovah. But to the true prophet this was considered treason. The mark of a true prophet was that he denounced sin, called to repentance, and proclaimed judgement to come for evil doing. This is reflected in Micah 3:8 "But truly, I am of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgement, and of might, to declare unto Jacob for his transgression, and to Israel his sin."

The false prophet on the other hand was usually nationalistic. He hardened the wicked in their sins and grieved the souls of the righteous, he made the wicked believe all was well when Jehovah was displeased; he is also portrayed in Micah 3:5; "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry peace." They encouraged hope when there was no hope.

"The false prophet represented a lower type of prophecy, which like true prophecy, began with the fusion of national and ethical interests, but which unlike true prophecy allowed the national to predominate over the ethical."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.10.



## SUMMARY

There is no period in the history of Israel that is more familiar to Bible students than the period of the kings. It was marked by both political and moral corruptions. Moreover, the main purpose for which the monarchy was founded—to deliver Israel from economic oppression and to keep alive the religion of Yahweh, was in a measure defeated. It is true that the kings were excellent political and military leaders, but made conditions no better from a moral point of view. In fact, there was a decided decrease in morality. Even though they delivered Israel out of the hands of her oppressors, yet in turn they themselves created problems which were worse; they added to the previous corruptions which crystallized in the eighth century B.C.





## PART IV.

## IV. THE WORK OF TWO SOCIAL REFORMERS IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

## 1. ELIJAH AND ELISHA

The activity of Elijah and Elisha came as the result of grave corruptions in the northern kingdom, between the division of the monarchy (937-750) and the time of Amos, although their roots were anchored in a more ancient past. Elijah was the greater of the two, in fact, he was the greatest of pre-literary prophets. He was the most progressive, powerful, and made the greatest contributions to prophetic thought of his day. His belief in the righteousness of Jehovah is shown in his attitude toward Ahab and his vicious Queen, when they deprived Naboth of his vineyard.

It was the work of Elijah to make plain the real issue involved in the conflict which existed between Jehovah and Baal; to raise the question as to whether Jehovah and He only was to be worshipped in Israel. Elijah saw that through the influence of Jezebel and the corruptness of Ahab that Israel was going astray. The cult of the Tyrian Baal with its hideous and licentious accompaniments, meant for Elijah apostasy from Jehovah and declension to a sensual nature worship. The cause of national righteousness was bound up with the triumph of Jehovah. From this point of view the judicial murder of Naboth is instructive, as illustrating



the inevitable connection between a debased type of religion and social iniquity. Elijah confronted Ahab as the embodied conscience of the theocracy (I Kings 22). But further still, he anticipated the later prophets in sharply distinguishing the cause of Jehovah from that of Israel. In the long and disastrous conflict with Syria, Israel was to learn that its enemies might be instruments of Jehovah's just vengeance, and that His purpose for His people might be one not of salvation but of judgement (IKings 19:14-17).

The issue with Elijah was not merely with Ahab and the votaries of Baal worship, but with the nation as a whole, in so far as his teaching directly traversed the popular belief that Jehovah was bound under all circumstances to fight for Israel. In fact, the preaching of Elijah, first brings to light the antagonism between the spiritual and the worldly interests of Israel, which later prophecy developed.

It is clear that both in Israel and Judah the spirit of prophecy came into inevitable collision, not only with the policy of individual kings and statesmen, but with the popular religion of the mass of the people. The preaching of the prophets was from one point of view a continuous polemic against the downgrade tendencies in Hebrew religion. Their zeal for Jehovah was directed not against Philistine oppression, but against national unrighteousness and social iniquity.



Elisha - Elisha was a contemporary of Elijah, although Elijah was the greater. In the religious sphere the mission of Elisha was to complete the work of Elijah, by extirpating the worship of Baal, even at the cost of a political revolution instigated by himself. The narratives indicate that Elisha attained to a position of great influence and prestige; but, he is not described as intervening in politics on more than one occasion. His fame as a wonder-worker lived long in Israel (II Kings 3:15); and he like Elijah, may be regarded as a connecting link between the simple divination of the ancient seers and the ethical prophecy of the eighth century.

#### a. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through the continued struggle of Elijah and Elisha, finally, the great cause for which they made their appearance in the northern kingdom was accomplished. Each in his own way boldly and fearlessly carried on a contest against Baal until they succeeded in driving the hated worship from Israel and the faithless dynasty from the throne. Once more the nation came to acknowledge Jehovah as its one and only God. Succeeding prophets however, still found it necessary to counteract the tendency to apostatize from Jehovah, but their chief duty was to set in a clearer light the nature and character of Jehovah and His purpose for Israel and mankind.





## PART V.

V DEMOCRATIC TEACHING OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS

The eighth century B.C. was a turning point of critical importance in the political history of Israel. It was also an age of great religious teachers.

The prophets of the eighth century were not conscious of any great break between themselves and their predecessors. They felt themselves one with Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha. The character of their message grew out of the natural conditions of the age which had been slowly growing through the centuries, together with their idea of the nature of God. This period was one of national aggrandizement on the part of leading nations and extraordinary prosperity both in Israel and Judah. But as is frequently the case, the material prosperity brought great evils in its train. The prophetic writing of the eighth century make it plain that Jehovah's religion was threatened by two serious perils: (1) moral and religious corruption, due to a wrong conception of the character of Jehovah, (2) the success of the Assyrians, which was to the great mass of people ~~an~~ evidence of the superior strength of the Assyrian deities, and might lead to a transfer of affection and homage from Jehovah to them. Either danger threatened the very life of Jehovah's religion. All four eighth century prophets were convinced that the only remedy was a



right conception of the nature and character of their God; and this they proceeded to supply, (1) all emphasized the universality of the Divine away, and declared that the success of the Assyrians were not due to Jehovah's weakness, but to the people's sins, which compelled Jehovah to send judgement upon them, and this judgement was to be executed by the Assyrians. (2) They all sought to impress upon the people a more adequate conception of the character of Jehovah, each emphasizing the phase of the divine character which he considered best adapted to his day and generation.

### 1. AMOS

Amos was the first of the eighth century prophets in chronological order. According to Amos 7:14, he was not a prophet by education or profession, but a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees (1:1, 7:14). It was while following his daily occupation that the divine call came to him to leave his home, Tekoa, in Judah, and preach to the northern kingdom—Israel. Amos left his flocks and sycamore groves and journeyed to Bethel, the religious center in the north. We do not know how long he remained there. However in Amos 7:10-17 we have the story telling of how the chief priest sought to silence him, in vain.

Amos prophesied to Israel during a period of great



prosperity and happiness; her boundaries were nearing that of David's time. Even the sanctuaries shared in the general prosperity; offerings and tithes were brought regularly and in abundance. People crowded the holy places, and celebrated the sacred feasts with all possible pomp. But this did not convince Amos that it was not superficial prosperity. He saw beneath the surface, the dark side of Israel's life as well. There was widespread violence and robbery. The poor were oppressed; the courts were notorious for corruption; dishonesty, graft and bribery were common practises. Even in the women, the human feelings were smothered. "There is no shame in Israel", says Amos. Yet in spite of her corruption she had a feeling of absolute security and self-righteousness. Israel seems to have thought that she alone had a claim to the divine favor, and that Jehovah was bound to be with her and protect her from all harm. Just when the festivities had reached their highest point in Israel, Amos made his appearance and began delivering his message of doom: "Jehovah will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither—The Lord Jehovah hath spoken who can but prophesy " (1:2, 3:8b)?

"Amos declared that, because their social life is cruel and rotten and their religion nothing but a gorgeous shame, the day is speedily coming when God will sweep it all away, levelling their ancient places of worship and their





palatial mansions with the ground. Then he turned to the women - the wives of the aristocracy and the well-to-do— and hurled at them a speech as scathing as any that has ever caused the ears of haughty dames to tingle."<sup>1</sup>

In the opinion of Amos the women were just as responsible for the awful conditions of Israel as the men.

Because Amos was not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, that is, from a professional point of view, (7:14) it has been thought that he was unlettered; but this is a serious mistake, as may be seen both from his knowledge of history and society and the excellence of his literary style. On the one hand he is criticised for rudeness in speech and on the other, many critics express their admiration for the strength and purity of Amos' literary style. In the words of Driver, S. R., "The Style of Amos possesses high literary merit. His language---is pure, his syntax is idiomatic, his sentences are smoothly constructed and clear." (Joel and Amos p. 115). According to Professor Mitchell, Amos, being a shepherd, often used words and expressions suggested by his calling; and sometimes constructed a sentence in such a way as would hardly be accepted by the scribes of Uzziah's court. "Judged by any proper standard" says Professor Mitchell, "Amos deserves to be ranked among the first of the sacred writers. He is usually remarkably forcible in present-

<sup>1</sup> MacFadyen, J.E., "A Cry for Justice", p.35.



ing his ideas; sometimes he is so skillful that but for the faults with which he is charged, one will hardly believe him identical with the shepherd of Tekoa."<sup>1</sup> Evidence points to the fact that the criticisms raised are comparatively insignificant as blemishes upon the style of Amos but only serve as proof of the authenticity of his book.

DATE - The date of Amos seems to be an unsolved problem; it has been placed from 784 to 750 B.C., however, 750 B.C. is correct. This was during the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel. The date just mentioned also meets the approval of Dr. Leslie, who says: "Amos' prophecy began about the year 750 B.C.

THE BOOK - The book of Amos falls into three divisions: I. Chapters 1 and 2. The approaching judgement upon six non-Israelitish nations, upon Judah and upon Israel. II. Chapters 3 to 6. A series of discourses of warning and exhortations. III. Chapters 7 to 9. Visions picturing the execution of the judgement, with interludes.

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, H. G., "Amos" (An Essay in Exegesis) p. 8.



## a. AMOS' MESSAGE TO THE RICH

At the outset it is to be understood that Amos was not primarily a prophet for the rich nor for the poor but rather the prophet of righteousness, and his message was one of doom irrespective of class. Yet, since the many corruptions about which he preached were practiced by the rich, incidentally, his message was to the rich.

The occasion of Amos' message was stated in part, in the last topic. His coming, we noticed, was at a time of great prosperity. Wealth rapidly increased, but tended to accumulate in the hands of the few. The small landholders sank into poverty, and even into the position of serfs. The rich busied themselves with the acquisition of estates and erection of palaces. Town-life with its usual accompaniments quickly undermined the old simplicity and independence of the Hebrew peasantry. The poor were victimised, not only by the large landowners who robbed them of what little they possessed, but dishonest traders, harsh creditors, and venal judges. In short, there were all the temptations of rapid wealth, all the dangers of an equally increasing poverty. The growth of comfort among the rulers meant the growth of thoughtlessness. Cruelty multiplied with refinement. The rich were lifted away from feeling the real woe of the mass. It was an age of transition from one stage of civilization to another;





and as we experienced from the World War, such an age or period is generally marked both by wide spread moral decay and by a heightening of spiritual life for the few. There was much zeal for religion, but the type of worship which attracted festal throngs to the various local sanctuaries and high places; was not the kind to elevate the moral tone of the worshippers. On the whole, it merely amounted to sacrifices and ceremonies. It was such religious practices that occasioned Amos 5:21-24:

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Here we find Amos, impatiently contrasting the etiquette of religious ritual with the importance of human justice.

Amos does not only stop with bringing indictment against Israel for her injustices and apostasy, but he tells her also that she must suffer punishment for the same. This is clearly illustrated in Amos 2:6-8.

"Thus saith Jehovah: for three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and a man and his father go unto the same maiden, to profane my holy name: and they lay themselves



down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge; and in house of such as have been fined."

Israel as a whole, and the rich were very religious, but had the wrong kind of religion. Not one time did she think of bringing it into the common places of weekday life. To her God and the things of God belonged the Sabbath, and the day after the Sabbath found her in the same condition as before. To such a people Amos gives a command:

"Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah, small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat? Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works " (8:4-7. In 2:12, 3:9-10, 4:1-2, 5:11-12, 6:3-6 we also have Amos' disapproval of Israel's way of living.).

One of the things that made Amos so courageous in dealing with Israel was due to the fact that she represented light and opportunity. He was mindful of all that Jehovah had done for Israel. He brought her out of the valley of dissatisfaction and unfavorable circumstances and guided her into the land of plenty. Not only did He bring her into the promised land and gave her victory over her enemies, but He gave her the gift of men, and through them - God. After doing all this, she turned her back to Him.

Israel's attention was turned toward <sup>The</sup> "day of Jehovah"



and so was Amos'. Although he was conscious that the day of Jehovah was not going to be so pleasant for Israel.

Amos was the first writer in Hebrew literature to use the term "The Day of Jehovah". From his point of view, it was going to be one of catastrophe - "Woe unto you" says he, "that desire the day of Jehovah! Wherefore, would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness and not light." (5:18-20 and 2:14-16, 3:12-15, 4:3). From the prophet's vision in Amos 7:7-8, the day of Jehovah would be a day of plumbing for Israel - She would be weighed in the balance and would be found wanting.

#### b. AMOS' CONCEPTION OF JEHOVAH

The current conception of Jehovah at the time of Amos was virtually the same as that held by other Semitic peoples concerning their national deities. The average Israelite had a firm conviction that Jehovah was the God of his nation, but he had no clear idea as to His requirements.

It did not matter to Israel whether He was ethical or not, she still was His chosen people, therefore, Jehovah must necessarily take side with her against her enemies, even though it was harmful to His cause. Amos had quite another view of Jehovah; he taught that the relationship between Jehovah and Israel was purely moral; he implied that even the





downfall of the nation might be necessary vindication of Jehovah's power and righteousness, that His sovereignty was manifested in the very events which seemed to prove Him weaker than the gods of the heathen, and that the only worship that He would accept would be that kind which results in social justice. In this way, he linked religion up with conscience. To seek good is to seek Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah is to seek good (5:6,14). "It is the clearness with which Amos laid hold of this great truth that gives to his teachings its epoch making significance and that lead us to speak of him ~~as~~ in a special sense <sup>as</sup> the prophet of righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

Not only did Amos admit that Israel was chosen by Jehovah, but this was a common echo of the eighth century prophets; but all like Amos, taught that His connection with Israel's past history demanded the response of moral obedience. Israel had forgotten the moral basis of Jehovah's covenant, and had lost sight of the true and of her peculiar calling as a holy people. The service of Jehovah, the real knowledge of Him, consisted in seeking Him in the way ordained by Himself. Truthful confidence in His power, obedience to His precepts, righteous dealing with humanity, good faith and mercy in relation to men. These were the

<sup>1</sup>Knudson, Albert C., "The Prophetic Movement in Israel" p.47:



things which made up the sum of real religion in Amos' mind, and the things acceptable with Jehovah. In short, his conception of Jehovah was that of an ethical being, and his requirement of His chosen people was a high ethical life.

In antagonism to the prevalent idea that Jehovah's favor depended on the maintenance of a costly cultus, Amos insisted that sacrifice was not of the essence of acceptance as a substitute of social righteousness, it was absolutely hateful to Jehovah (5:21).

The ideal of Amos was not necessarily a service of Jehovah entirely destitute of outward ceremonies, but a service which would reflect His holiness and would be congruous with His revealed attributes.

In the course of his teachings he emphasized the following: (1) Jehovah is a person. (2) He is the only true God. (3) He is all powerful. (4) He knows everything. (5) He is everywhere present. (6) He is merciful. (7) Above all else, he taught that Jehovah is a righteous God, whose favor can be secured only by a life of righteousness. These truths Amos did not discuss in an abstract manner, but in their practical bearing upon the past, present and future history of Israel. But while he dealt primarily with the historical Israel of his own age, yet he gave expression to several religious and moral truths that were of permanent significance. Of these the most important were (1) Justice



between men is one of the divine functions of society. (2) Privilege implies responsibility. (3) Failure to recognize responsibility will surely bring punishment. (4) Nations and individuals are bound to live up to the measure of light and knowledge granted to them. (5) The most elaborate worship is but an insult to God when offered by those who have no intention of conforming to His demands.

Amos did not leave Israel in darkness, "he was the pioneer of a process of evolution from which a new epoch of humanity dates."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. HOSEA

We know very little about the early life of Hosea. We know that he was the son of a certain Beerī, of the northern kingdom where his life as a prophet was apparently spent. But on the whole, our only knowledge concerning him is his book. And some Old Testament scholars go so far as to say that there is but little that can be extracted with certainty from his own book. We do know however, that Hosea was the second of the eighth century prophets and arose to action a few years after the withdrawal of Amos from Israel. His connection with Israel was at a time when the religious, moral and social evils had become very aggravated; and during

<sup>1</sup> Cornill, C.H., "Prophets of Israel" p. 46.





the latter part of his ministry, the political situation went from bad to worse. At the beginning of his prophecy, evidently, Jeroboam II was king of Israel, but after the death of Jeroboam, a period of anarchy and lawlessness ensued which culminated in the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C.

One great advantage Hosea had over his predecessor was that Amos was a native of Judah, sent to the northern kingdom on a temporary mission, while on the other hand, Hosea was a citizen of the north bound by a sympathetic patriotism to the kingdom whose destruction he was commissioned to predict.

When we attempt to set a date for Hosea we meet with much difficulty. Most authors date his ministry between 738 and 734 B.C. Chapters 1-3 contain references to events and prophecies of the time of Jeroboam II, although written later. While much in chapters 4-14 reflects the period of disorder that followed his death. The chronology of the period is obscure.

In the book of Hosea we have the substance of the prophet's earnest and persistent appeal by which he sought to bring the faithless nation back to its divine master. It falls into two parts: chapters 1-3 and 4-14.

I. In chapters 1-3, we have the prophet's marriage, and the application of the story: Jehovah's love and Israel's



faithlessness. II. chapters 4-14. Hosea's prophetic discourses; (1) awful condition of the people, due to the lack of knowledge of Jehovah, for which lack the priests are responsible (4:1-9); (2) The utter corruption of Israel - the inevitable doom (5:1, 8:14); (3) The present rejoicing contrasted with the despair of the exile (9:1-9); (4) a series of retrospects, showing the utter corruption of Israel (9:10, 11:11); (5) a new series of indictments (11:12, 12:14); (6) Israel's glory turned to shame (13:1-16); (7) Israel's repentance - God's pardon (14:1-3); followed by an exhortation to study the book of Hosea (9).

The influences which contributed to the prophetic call of Hosea were quite unlike those which influenced his predecessor. In the case of Amos it was apostasy, but with Hosea it was domestic affairs. The question of his marriage, as narrated in 1:2,3 requires further consideration. The account has received various interpretations, all of which may be arranged under three heads: 1, Hosea, at the divine command is thought to have allied himself with a woman who at the time was known to be a public woman or a woman of the streets, for the purpose of reclaiming her. 2, Some interpreters regard the whole narrative as the account of a vision, a transaction in a dream or trance, never carried out in real life, or a parable or allegory, or figurative mode.



of speech, without any historical basis in the domestic life of the prophet. 3. "The third and most probably view" says Eiselen, (The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament Vol. II, p. 376) "regards the narrative as a record of actual facts, but not in the same way as the first interpretation", that is, that Gomer was defiled and that Hosea took her at the divine command. According to Eiselen, Gomer was thought of as being unstained when she became Hosea's wife. His view is supported he thinks, by the expression "a wife of whoredom" (1:2). It is his opinion that if Hosea had meant to say that she was already devoted to an unchaste life, he would in all probability have called her "a harlot". The latter denotes a woman of unchaste disposition. He further states however, that the evil tendencies were within Gomer but had not manifested themselves.

"Hosea loved her dearly, but his love was not sufficient to prevent the outbreak. She finally abandoned him for her paramour, or perhaps for the licentious rites connected with the worship of the Baals. As the prophet, his heart still burning with tender love for his faithless spouse, sat and pondered over his past domestic experience, he came to see that even this tragic occurrence could teach him a lesson which in turn, he might teach Israel. He did not know the significance of it all at the time of the occurrence; only gradually did it dawn upon him that so far as his unique message of the divine love was concerned, the unhappy alliance was the first step in his prophetic career, it was from the vantage point of the later revelation that Hosea described the earlier experience."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Eiselen, F.C., "Prophetic Books of the Old Testament" p.376.





C.A. Hawley believes with the students of the third theory, namely, that it was a real experience in the prophet's life, but differs in that he doesn't believe that Jehovah told Hosea what to do. He attributes the prophet's fate to natural conditions, instead of to the divine influence. He claims that it is a common thing in the East for people to marry very early. Men marry at the age of sixteen and girls younger than twelve. Hosea being a lad, he thinks, of about sixteen, was moved by his first love to marry Gomer, and it was that first love which proved to be his last or only love. He also thinks that the second command (chapter 3) is historic but not in the sense that Jehovah told Hosea "God love your adulterous wife who loves a paramour"....etc.<sup>1</sup> but his taking her back was the result of his own independent thinking. In other words, he claims that Hosea cared so much for her that he was willing to take her back in spite of the fact that she had gone wrong. In my opinion it is impossible to say definitely, that the divine was not working through Hosea, even though apparently, he was moved by his own volition.

Knudson, A.C. ("Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.100) believes with the students of the second school: "the marriage of Hosea should be taken as an allegory. The command to take a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom (1-2) could not

<sup>1</sup>Hawley, C.A. "The Teachings of the Prophets" p.60.



have literally been given to the prophet. And the second command (chapter 3) fits in very poorly with chapter one.<sup>1</sup> Knudson thinks that the whole story of chapters 1-3 is an allegory and should be so interpreted. By so doing, in his opinion much can be said in favor of a purely symbolical interpretation of the chapters. The great perplexity in such interpretation, is that no objective evidence can be offered in its favor. Although it may be logical but it does not discredit the other two views.

Doubtless Knudson disposes of the problem in a rather unique way when he says that in dealing with a problem like this, "Interpreters usually fall back upon their personal taste".<sup>2</sup>

No doubt, this explanation best explains the stand taken by each interpreter, yet the weight of evidence favors a natural experience in the life of Hosea.

#### a. HOSEA'S MESSAGE REGARDING SOCIAL IMMORALITY

Turning from the theories regarding Hosea's marriage and the influences which made him a prophet to the character of his message, we find him following in the footsteps of Amos, his predecessor.

The social immoralities which were prevalent in the northern kingdom during the time of Amos were still flourishing

<sup>1</sup>Knudson, Albert C. "Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.100

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.100



and lived throughout the ministry of Hosea. In fact, the social evils became worse and worse. Therefore, the message of Hosea was very much akin to that of Amos. Amos' message was deeply impregnated with the element of doom and so was Hosea's. Dr. Knudson brings this out in his book very clearly: "Amos does not deal more unsparingly with Israel's sins than does Hosea, nor does he announce her approaching doom more confidently and more unrelentingly. If anything, Hosea is the more bitter, the fiercer of the two."<sup>1</sup>

The above statement is verified in Hosea's social message, which is a denunciation against Israel for her dishonesty, injustice, or immorality in dealing with her fellow men. His final word depicts a day of visitation when Israel shall pay for the sins she has committed and for the injustices she has wrought.

In 4:2 we have Jehovah's controversy with Israel: "There is naught but swearing and breaking faith, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out and blood touched blood."

In 5:10 Hosea raises his voice against corrupted practices in real estate actions. Regarding which he says: "The princess of Judah are like those that remove the landmark; I will pour out my wrath upon them like water."

<sup>1</sup>Knudson, A.C., "Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p. 107.





In 12:7-8, Hosea brands dishonesty in business:

"He is a trafficker the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said surely I am become rich, I have found me wealth: in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that were sin."

In 7:1-2 Hosea condemns general immorality and falsehood. Concerning which he says: "When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Israel uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood, and the thief entereth in, and the troop of robbers ravageth without. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: Now have their own doings beset them about, they are before my face."

In 9:7 Hosea is telling Israel about the day of punishment for her infidelity; the day of visitation:

"The days of visitation are come, and the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad, for the abundance of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great."

Hosea was greatly concerned with Israel's political life. He was living in the midst of the troubled times following the death of Jeroboam, during which time a king's life counted for nothing, but the office for all. One by one they were assassinated, from the reign of Lechariah to



that of Hosea, who ascended the throne as an Assyrian vassal and was the last of the kings of Israel. There were thus within eight or nine years, from 740 B.C. to about 732, no less than seven different kings of Israel, and of these, four were assassinated by their successors. Hosea declared that the murderers who followed or succeeded one another upon the throne to be king, lacked the divine ordination to their office. He denounced the king and the court for the unblushing sensuality of their conduct.

He threatened the royal house with destruction and the nation with exile (10:6, 9:3). He pictures Israel as being the unfaithful child of Jehovah, and speaks of all her wrongdoings as apostasy from Jehovah. The immorality, the idolatry, the foreign alliances, the man-made kings - all these were instances of disloyalty on Israel's part to the God of her fathers. At the outset she had been true to Him (2:14f 9:10), she had responded to His affection but soon thereafter, she turned away from Him.

Hosea said that Israel's ills would not only stop or end with the present generation, but her children's children will suffer from her wrong doings (5:4). He also predicts that in times of trouble Israel would return to Jehovah but she is not stable. What Israel needs is a new birth but the moral energy necessary to bring this about is



lacking (13:13). Therefore, for the lack of moral courage and perseverance, Israel was doomed to death.

Among the many things which Hosea tried to teach Israel, was that Jehovah was able to solve all of her problems. Israel sought channels other than Jehovah for the solution of her national and international problems. She resorted to foreign powers for the cure of national ills instead of Jehovah. Hosea told Israel that such a policy was doomed to failure to begin with. He says "Ephraim is like a silly dove without understanding; they call unto Egypt, they do to Assyria." (7:11). In spite of the gifts which they bear with them, they will by their diplomatic efforts secure no real aid." (10:6, 12:1). He told them that the great Assyrian king was not able to heal their ills and to cure their wounds (5:13). For the Assyrians were just as they. Hosea did not condemn Israel for the very act within itself, that is, securing the aid of other nations, for this was good political vision, but it represented disloyalty to "Yahweh."

Hosea is quite sure that Jehovah will punish Israel for her attitude toward Him (9:15). It is not even clear in his mind just what this punishment will be but it is inevitable. We know that he uses the term "sword" (7:16, 11:6) but it is not clear as to whether this term was used to mean internal destruction or external destruction by enemies.





## b. THE NEED OF TRUE DEVOTION.

Political and social corruptions were not the only immoralities against which Hosea raised his voice. He laid much emphasis upon the fatal lack of true knowledge and devotion to Jehovah. Seemingly, Israel did not know to what force or forces to render her loyalty. For a time she would meditate over the goodness of Jehovah and the many things which He had done for her, and line up with His forces only to turn in some other direction at the first wind that blew. Hosea was conscious of the fact that this kind of devotion was not acceptable with God. He thinks of Israel as being very unstable. Israel was good but momentarily — one could not trust her. Hosea became utterly disgusted with such inconsistency in devotion, so much so that he cries out against it in 6:4-5: "What can I make of you, O Ephraim! What can I make of you, O Israel! Since your love is like a morning cloud, yea, like the dew which early goes away. Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth. And my judgment is like the light that goes forth, for it is love that I delight in and not sacrifice, And knowledge of God and not burnt-offering."

Even though, Israel was unfaithful to Jehovah and momentary in her goodness, yet this did not turn God's love from her.



Hosea has rightly been called the prophet of love. He frowned against Israel's apostasy, immoral practices in the business world and unstable goodness, yet the very heart of his message lies in two words: "love and hope". Unlike Amos, the prophet of justice; with Hosea it was not a question of justice. Amos' God was a God of justice and the problems which he attempted to solve were those having to do with justice. But in Hosea we have quite a different character and a different picture of God, who is love.

It was through love that Jehovah redeemed Israel from Egypt and His love continued throughout her history. Even His chastisements are not without love (11:3-4, 7:5). Occasionally, Hosea apparently forgets the God of love and paints a "fifty-fifty" God; a God of justice, as we have in 9:15-16. But Old Testament scholars agree that such passages do not represent Hosea under normal conditions. The fundamental ideas of Hosea are to be found in such passages as 3:1 and 11:14: "Jehovah loves the children of Israel though they turn unto other gods." (3:1) His love is even the same. Again, his conception of Jehovah is expressed in terms of marriage relation: Jehovah the husband and Israel the wife (chapters 1-3); but still more impressive is the relation of father and child. "When Israel was a child then I loved him and called him out of Egypt. I taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms, I drew them with cords of



a man, with hands of love " (11:1-4).

Nowhere in the Old Testament does the love attribute to God shine out more clearly than in the teachings of Hosea. He sounded a note seemingly unknown to Amos or any of the other prophets to the degree that it is found in him. Apparently, without recognizing the significance of his own domestic corruption, one cannot explain his rich insight to the nature of God. There can be no doubt that when Hosea speaks about God and the love of God, he speaks out of a store house of knowledge with far more breadth than can even be found in a dictionary. It cost him mental pains, torture, and probably, sleepless nights. This makes his words all the more valuable toward the understanding of God.

Hosea branded all social and political immorality as disloyalty to the will of Jehovah as well as momentary devotion, because they failed to measure up to the will of the God of whom he had learned through domestic experience - "The God of Love".





### 3. ISAIAH

During the later years of Hosea's activity in Israel, Isaiah the third and greatest of the Hebrew prophets began his ministry in Judah. He began to prophecy in the year that King Uzziah died, about 740 B.C. and continued until about 700 B.C. According to the narratives regarding Isaiah his ministry was restricted to Judah, the southern kingdom. Yet he faced pretty much the same problems that Amos and Hosea had faced in Israel, the northern kingdom. In fact, the social, political, moral and religious conditions in Judah were practically the same as in Israel during the same period; and the age demanded a man of faith, courage and spiritual insight. The personality of Isaiah was such as to fit him for the mighty tasks before him. Isaiah was a man of high mettle; who found it quite consistent with lowliness to pour contempt upon a weak, vacillating king, to fling burning scorn against mocking sceptics, to denounce falsehood and deceit with words that scorched and blistered. His one outstanding characteristic was strength, strength of character; born of intense convictions and of strong and lofty motives. Isaiah is in truth a king among prophets. He was not like Amos, or Hosea, nor his younger contemporary Micah, a man of the country; his home was in Jerusalem, and he appears



to have been of high social rank, perhaps a member of the royal family. Isaiah married and became the father of two sons. To these he gave symbolic names. One was called Shear-yashub - meaning "a remnant shall return" (7:3); and to the other Maher-shalal-hash-baz - meaning "Swift-booty - speedy-prey" (8:3). These names expressed two important aspects of the prophet's teachings.

The book of Isaiah falls into several parts of unequal lengths, it also represents the ministry of three distinct prophets. Some Old Testament scholars class them as first, second, and third Isaiah, others, Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Trito-Isaiah. Dr. Leslie thinks that the name Trito-Isaiah, is used probably for the lack of a suitable name for the section representative of this third Isaiah. At any rate, chapters 1-39 represent the prophecy of Isaiah. Chapters 40-55 Deutero-Isaiah, and chapters 56-66 are assigned to Trito-Isaiah. However, we are concerned only with chapters 1-39 within which are to be found the ideas of Isaiah. In chapters 1-12 are prophecies centering around Judah and Israel, coming from different periods of Isaiah's activity and dealing with a variety of subjects. II. chapters 13-23 prophecies concerning various foreign nations that came into hostile contact with Israel and Judah. III. Chapters 24-27 give a portrayal, in vivid colors, of a great

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The first of the year was a very cold one, and the weather was very disagreeable. The wind was very strong, and the rain was very heavy. The snow was very deep, and the ice was very thick. The people were very much distressed, and the animals were very much starved.

The second of the year was a very warm one, and the weather was very pleasant. The wind was very light, and the rain was very light. The snow was very thin, and the ice was very thin. The people were very much pleased, and the animals were very much content.

The third of the year was a very cold one, and the weather was very disagreeable. The wind was very strong, and the rain was very heavy. The snow was very deep, and the ice was very thick. The people were very much distressed, and the animals were very much starved.

The fourth of the year was a very warm one, and the weather was very pleasant. The wind was very light, and the rain was very light. The snow was very thin, and the ice was very thin. The people were very much pleased, and the animals were very much content.

The fifth of the year was a very cold one, and the weather was very disagreeable. The wind was very strong, and the rain was very heavy. The snow was very deep, and the ice was very thick. The people were very much distressed, and the animals were very much starved.

The sixth of the year was a very warm one, and the weather was very pleasant. The wind was very light, and the rain was very light. The snow was very thin, and the ice was very thin. The people were very much pleased, and the animals were very much content.

world judgement, and of the escape of God's faithful people from its terrors. IV. Chapters 28-33 are grouped discourses having for their subject chiefly the relations of Judah with Egypt and Assyria. V. Chapters 34-35 present a contrast between the destiny of Edom and that of Israel. VI. chapters 36-39 an historical section dealing chiefly with the activity of Isaiah during the reign of Hezekiah.

#### a. DENUNCIATION OF JUDICIAL INJUSTICE

The key to Isaiah's activity is to be found in his inaugural vision given in the sixth chapter of his book. From the story as it is given one may be led to believe that the experience took place suddenly without any previous meditation on the part of Isaiah, but this is an error; his vision was not without preparation or connection with his general surroundings. On every hand Isaiah saw nothing but corruption; legal injustice in the courts, misuse of political authority to exploit the dependent and laboring classes, luxury, debauchery, and incompetency on the part of the rulers.

From 6:5 we get the idea that the main reason why Isaiah made a change in his life, was due to his realization as never before that he belonged to a people of unclean lips. In fact the main features of chapter six have to do with





Isaiah's vision and commission.

Evidently, Isaiah did not consider himself in a different category from the mass of people of Judah; that is, religiously. I do not mean that he was exploiting the needy, etc., as did the masses, but he had not surrendered his will to the will of God. No one brings this out better than Isaiah himself. In 6:5, after telling of the great vision, and evidently after doing some thinking, he exclaims: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

At this point seemingly Isaiah comes to a realization as to just what it means to see the king and what He stands for. I am of the opinion that he received his lofty conception of Jehovah at the close of 6:5a, for 6:5b is only an explanation of what he saw. "For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts". (6:5b). Moreover, the kind of king that Isaiah saw "in the year that King Uzziah died" was one very different from any earthly king that he had ever seen. He was a king of holiness and majesty; not only a high God, but high and lifted up. Isaiah saw a great contrast between Jehovah and Judah. There was no way to square the social life of the nation with the character of his Jehovah whom he saw in his vision. The only possible thing



for him to say was that Judah has transgressed the will of Jehovah. He himself just seeing the light and the nature of Jehovah for the first time, it is reasonable to believe that he was anxious to pass on his findings to others or rather spread the glad tidings. Apparently, this opportunity came not long after his vision, while he was still zealous. In 6:8 he heard a voice calling for a volunteer to go to the south and carry His word: ("Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?") and he at once took the advantage of the opportunity, answering the call in the same verse ("Here am I, send me") to Jehovah's divine call. Henceforth, Isaiah's great mission was to influence his fellowmen to be loyal to the demands of his holy and magnificent ruler and thus to share in establishing His kingdom on earth.

"Whenever Isaiah found injustice or anything that was incompatible with his lofty conception of the divinely perfect state," says Kent, "he tactfully and uncompromisingly assailed it." Conditions in Judah were so corrupt that Isaiah's teachings were on the whole negative. However he did not bring a new message to Judah, but rather a reiteration of the same principles already laid down by Amos. Yet it is comparatively easy to detect even in his most bitter invectives, the outlines of the perfect social

<sup>1</sup>Kent, C.F., "Social Teachings of Jesus and the Prophets" p. 61.





order which he was striving to establish. In Isaiah's opinion, Judah was not at all without religion, but it was of the wrong kind. In this respect we have a vivid contrast between Amos and Isaiah. The thing which stirred him most was the fact that Judah's unsocial practices were done in the name of religion. Isaiah branded the attitude of the rulers as ungodliness, and denounced judicial injustice as well. Apparently, law and respect for personality in Judah did not apply to rulers; they did as they pleased and bribed the courts. In fact, the courts were so corrupt that justice was almost impossible. In 3:14b, 15b Isaiah charged the rulers with grave corruptions: "you yourselves have devoured the vineyards. The spoils of the needy are in your house. What do you mean by crushing my people and by grinding the face of the needy?" In 1:21-23 Isaiah declared that graft was written all over Judah's public life. He was convinced that if it continued the whole nation was likely to be ruined. In Isaiah 3:16,17, 24, and 26-4:1, we find that the attitude of the women in Judah was similar to the women in Israel, during the days of Amos. Isaiah very emphatically declared that destruction was sure and inescapable. Turning to the rulers, the prophet hurled a prophetic bomb at judicial injustices: "Woe to those who for a bribe vindicate the wicked, and strip the innocent man of his innocence." (5:23). Another





immortal utterance of Isaiah regarding unjust legislation is recorded in Isaiah 10:1-4b:

"Woe to those who set up iniquitous decrees,  
And the scribes who devoted themselves to  
writing oppression,  
To turn aside the dependent from securing justice,  
To despoil the afflicted of my people of their  
right  
That widows may be their prey,  
And that they may spoil orphans!  
What, then, will you do in the day of punishment,  
And of the driving tempest which shall come  
from afar?  
To whom will you flee for aid,  
And where will you leave your wealth?  
Only as they crouch under the captives,  
And fall under the slain."

In Isaiah's opinion Judah was losing sight of the primary forces necessary for the fullest and highest possible life. She was only concerned with the material side of life. It is true that she was very religious, especially from a ritualistic point of view, but it was not that type which speaks to one's conscience, or condemns exploitation. If so, the above quotation would have been totally out of order. To be sure that we have not been unfair in our stand regarding the religion of Judah, a glance at Isaiah 1:11-17 will reveal the fact that there was much in her form of worship that fell far beneath Isaiah's view as to what Jehovah demanded of his worshippers. "What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of your burnt-offerings.....W hen ye come before

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me, who hath required this at your hands, to trample my courts?.....Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek justice, set aright the oppressed and fatherless, plead for the widow" (1:11-17). It is reasonable to believe that Isaiah was not opposed to his people having a reasonable amount of the material things of life, but he wanted spirituality to supersede materialism and religion to be the everyday business of life.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the  
general principles of the theory of the structure of the  
crystal lattice. It is shown that the structure of the  
crystal lattice is determined by the nature of the  
chemical bonds between the atoms. The second part of the  
paper is devoted to a discussion of the properties of the  
crystal lattice. It is shown that the properties of the  
crystal lattice are determined by the nature of the  
chemical bonds between the atoms. The third part of the  
paper is devoted to a discussion of the properties of the  
crystal lattice. It is shown that the properties of the  
crystal lattice are determined by the nature of the  
chemical bonds between the atoms.

## b. LAND MONOPOLY

In the previous topic, an attempt was made to point out judicial corruptions in Judah and the failure of religion to function ethically in everyday problems. However, these were not the only evils against which the prophet lifted his voice; along with these was the great thirst for land and land monopoly. Moreover, this thirst for land had penetrated so deeply into the national life of Judah that the evils resulting therefrom were placed in the same category with those of the courts and temples.

Apparently, men had a false notion as to the use of land. According to Old Testament scholars, through the ages there had grown up the idea that a man with land was the great example. To many people the great problem of life centered in wealth - to have land, money, stock and houses was the great end; to lack them was a great misfortune. This problem was not at all peculiar to the rich but to the poor as well. The poor in his envy and anxiety to deal in real estate was just as much corrupt as the rich. In Isaiah's condemnation against those who by fair or foul





means absorbed the hereditary estates of their less fortunate brethren until they owned many acres in which to dwell in ease and satisfaction, he enunciated a new and exceedingly important social principle. (5:8-10).

"Woe to those who join house to house,  
 Who add field to field  
 Until there is no space left,  
 And you dwell alone in the midst of the land.  
 In mine ears Jehovah of hosts hath sworn,  
 Surely many houses shall become a desolation,  
 Though great and fair, they shall be without  
 inhabitants;  
 For ten acres of vineyard will yeild but one  
 bushel,  
 And ten bushels of seed but one bushel of grain."

There is a greater similarity between Amos and Isaiah than between Hosea and Isaiah, but in Isaiah, chapter 5:8-10, we have a section that is paralleled in Hosea. Not only is there a parallel in Hosea but it is in the same chapter. Chapter five of Isaiah deals with dishonesty in real estate and so does chapter five of Hosea. Evidently, the same thirst and anxiety for land which was common among the people of Judah was also characteristic of the Israelites. In fact, most Old Testament scholars affirm the opinion that there was essentially no difference between the social conditions in Judah and Israel. For example, as we study sections in Hosea's message, we find him denouncing Israel for the same corruptions for which Isaiah denounced Judah. In Hosea 4:2 Israel is stealing, killing, and committing adultery. In 5:10 she is dishonest in real estate



matters. So great is her corruption that in Hosea 7:12 we have him saying: "When I would heal Israel, then is the iniquity of Israel uncovered."

According to Kent, Isaiah was not condemning land monopoly only, but all monopoly that is egoistic; even the dwelling along of a man in the midst of the land, if it is egoistic. All such selfish tendencies lead men from God.

The people whom Isaiah denounced were those with divided allegiance. Their desire for land and wealth was so great that it was leading them to worship "things" instead of God. It was making them selfish and self-sufficient, creating a philosophy which caused the great problems of life to center about material things. Isaiah knew full well, that if a man allowed the quest of land and land monopoly to become his master, he thereby became an object slave, subject to the most cruel of tyrants; but if he regards land simply as a servant and uses it to minister to his highest interests and to those of society, he is not only a wise man, but an efficient citizen.

The great principles enunciated by Isaiah regarding land and land monopoly are yet to be realized in modern society, they take on added significance when we recall that he came from the wealthy and ruling class.



## c. THE DAY OF VISITATION

Each of the eighth century prophets had a different conception of God. Amos saw Him as a God of righteousness; Hosea saw Him as a God of Love; Isaiah saw Him as a God of holiness and majesty, and Micah saw Him as a God of justice. Yet we find in each of them the idea of doom: According to Amos and Micah, the day of visitation would be the result of Israel's transgressing the laws of social righteousness; according to Hosea (which is a sub-Christian view) the day of visitation would be due to the lack of the true knowledge of God; and in Isaiah, the spirit of materialism and the tendency to lean upon an arm of flesh would culminate in the day of visitation. In three of the prophets corruption is the real cause of doom; they saw a great conflict between the nature of God and the attitude of the people. Hosea laid his emphasis on the lack of the true knowledge of God which would result in doom; but finally in the closing chapters of his book he saved the good character of his God of love, by having Him accept Israel as the unfaithful, yet repentant child.

There can be no doubt that the day of visitation occupied a prominent place in the thoughts and teachings of Isaiah. "From his inaugural vision in B.C. 740 down, at least, to the invasion of Sennacherib in 701, the one thing





he seems to have been most concerned to impress upon the people of his day was the fact of the impending doom. He predicted it again and again under the most varied forms."<sup>1</sup> There was not the slightest idea in the mind of Isaiah that his predictions would not come true. The purposes of Isaiah's predictions were to quicken the sense of obligation among his people to Jehovah. The day of visitation which Isaiah predicted was not for Judah only, but for Israel as well; a general day when all ungodliness and proudness would be reckoned with. The prophet is very clear in 2:12 when he exclaims: "There shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low." Isaiah, like the other prophets, seemed to have sensed very deeply the seriousness and solemnity of the day of visitation; for it was going to be huge in its scope. Not limited primarily to Judah's political corruptions, but covering the faults of all concerned (28:15, 18). In chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 22, and 29 we have Isaiah telling the rulers of their faults. His first indictment is recorded in chapter one. "The princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth bribes, and follow<sup>eth</sup> after rewards." (1:23). (2) "They crush my people, and grind the face of the poor" (3:15). (3) "They

<sup>1</sup>Xnudson, A.C., "Beacon Lights of Prophecy", p. 145.



justify the wicked for a bribe and take away the righteousness of righteous from him" (5:23). (4) "Drunkenness and luxury" (10:2). (5) "Diseased head and heart" (1:5-6). (6) "False praises: This people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me." (29:13). Isaiah was fully convinced that his people were placing their trust in the flesh and that their great thirst was for the material things of life. But in the day of Jehovah he declared that all that was lofty would be brought low; idols would pass away, and Jehovah alone would be exalted and reign in justice and righteousness.

#### 4. MICAH

A few years after Isaiah entered upon his prophetic career there appeared another prophet in Judah, by the name of Micah. Micah was the fourth and the last of the eighth century prophets. Both Micah and Isaiah cherished lofty conceptions of the character of Jehovah and of the obligations resting upon His people, and both had firmly established the conviction concerning the nature and ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God. A comparison of the utterances of the two men also brings out resemblance in style, thought, topic and even phrases; but the contrasts



between the two in origin, training, and sphere of activity are equally marked. The one was a city prophet, of high social standing, and the counsellor of kings; the other, a simple countryman, born of obscure parentage and in close touch and sympathy with the peasant class. Even some Old Testament scholars call Micah the prophet of the poor, although he is commonly known as the prophet of justice. Yet this sub-title may be justified upon the ground that he himself was from the common people and in turn preached against injustices inflicted upon them. This was not a type of spoil system which is practiced in politics but the natural results of environment and training. The same is equally true of Isaiah, his background was that of the court and high society and his whole ministry was colored by his environment. Even though Micah did not come from the great city, Jerusalem, but a simple village, Moresheth-Gath, yet it did not prevent him from seeing the threatening approach of the Assyrians, and interpreting it as a visitation of God upon Israel and Judah for their social, moral and religious misdoings. While Isaiah chiefly satirizes the fads of the cities, towns and court, Micah scourages the avarice of the landowners and the injustice which oppresses the peasants. As might be expected, Micah is unequalled when pleading the cause of the needy.

The date of Micah is quite unknown. Cheyne thinks





that he prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, king of Judah, that is, between 740 and 686 B.C. and believes that the reference made to Micah in Jeremiah 26:18 is sufficient proof to substantiate the fact that he was a prophet during the reign of Hezekiah. The words in Jeremiah 26:18 are as follows: "Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of Israel, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah". It is exceedingly difficult to give an exact date for Micah, but it is very certain that it was between 740 and 686 B.C. Dr. Leslie thinks that about 728 is a pretty reasonable date for Micah. He also says that if Micah 6:1-8 was preached by Micah his ministry extended after 692 B.C.

The last four chapters of Micah, from my point of view have been unjustly assailed. Many scholars claim that they represent a subsequent period in the history of Israel, at least chapters 6-7. However this assumption has not been proved. I hold that the author of chapters 1-3 is also the author of chapters 4-7. The solution to the problem is to be found in the great significance and importance of Babylon, even in the Assyrian period, as the historic seat of world empire (Gen. 10:10-11) and so essentially antagonistic to the city of God. Similarly, from the time of Ewald, the



genuineness of chapters 6-7 has been assailed. Ewald dated them in Manassah's time; Wellhausen and Stade followed him in so dating VI. I-VII. 6, putting VII. 7-2 in the exile; Cornill sees in VII references to the second temple; and other scholars take positions essentially in agreement with these. But when it is noted that in VII. 7-20 the exile lies still in the future and that between this part and chapters I-V there are numerous coincidences and points of contact, the conclusion will follow that this part has the same author as the rest of the book. The impression that the book makes is that of a unit, with fuller reports of the deliverances in chapters I-II., more condensed and fragmentary reports in the other chapters.

#### a. MICAH'S TEACHINGS REGARDING THE GREED OF RULERS

The state of affairs which called forth Micah's teachings, denouncing greed, were not unlike those in the days of the other eighth century prophets. In fact, there was a close similarity between the social conditions of Judah and Israel during the period of the previous prophets and that of Micah. The peasantry of Judah were ground down by numerous exactions and illegal oppressive treatment on the part of the grenadiers. Commerce had increased the wealth of a few, and made the old law of land-tenure more

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the various factors which have shaped the development of the United States, including the influence of the British, the Spanish, and the French. He also discusses the role of the American people in the creation of the nation. The paper concludes by stating that the study of the history of the United States is a task of great importance, and that it is one which should be undertaken by all who are interested in the future of the country.

and more difficult to maintain. The local sanctuaries still existed (Micah 1:5); Hezekiah's reform was probably not so complete as we find in II Kings 18:4. The religious state of Judah, then, was by no means such as Micah could approve; nor was its political state free from corruption. The prophet saw no way for the nation to prosper when the ruling class set the law of morality itself at defiance. Even though Hezekiah is said to have been a very splendid prince, probably the best that ever adorned the throne of David, he was the last king who not only reigned in the spirit of the true religion, but also reigned prosperously until his death. Yet, Micah through his divine insight saw corruptions. With his grim determination and the absolute conviction of his divine call to make known to the greedy rulers of his nation the woes which they were bringing upon the innocent, he pronounced a coming judgement more severe than even that declared by Isaiah. It took a prophet like Micah to point out the real corruptions of the nation, especially the city. A man like Isaiah who was accustomed to city life was likely to overlook much that was sapping the very life of the nation; but not so with Micah. It is believed by some students of the Old Testament that Micah actually studied conditions in the capital city, not with the dulled vision of one who had been brought up amidst them, but with the eyes of a man fresh from the free, simple life of the





country. With clear insight he saw the sinister significance of the flagrant crimes which were perpetuated against the defenseless classes under the shadow of the royal court and sacred temple. Micah being a country preacher knew very little about the policies of the king, but from personal experience he knew that they were but evidences of the deeper lying evil: selfishness, greed, and mercenary spirit of the rulers who guided Judah during her perilous period. Like Amos, Micah was the living mouth-piece of the people. No bribe was great enough to buy him as was the case with the false prophets; his convictions were deeply imbedded in his bosom, therefore unshakable. In facing the princes, courtiers, royal priests and prophets of the nation, Micah was almost alone, but he looked these rulers squarely in the face and called them merciless cannibals. Instead of protecting, they preyed on the people intrusted to their charge (Micah 3:1-3):

"Hear now, O heads of Jacob,  
And ye, judges of the house of Israel.  
Is it not your duty to know what is the right?  
Haters of that which is good and lovers of evil!

They devour the flesh of my people,  
And their hide they strip from off them,  
And break in pieces and serve up their bones,  
As in a pot or as meat in the cooking-pan!

In the same spirit Micah denounces the leaders of Judah for perverting justice and practicing hypocrisy. (Mic. 3:9-11):



"Hear this, ye heads of the house of Jacob,  
 And ye judges of the house of Israel,  
 Ye who spurn justice,  
 And make all that is straight crooked.  
 Who build Zion with acts of bloodshed,  
 And Jerusalem with crime.

The heads render judgement for a bribe,  
 And her priests give oracles for a reward,  
 And her prophets divine for silver;  
 Yet they lean upon Jehovah and think,  
 Jehovah is indeed in our midst,  
 Evil cannot overtake us."

For such crimes Micah declares in 3:12:

"Therefore, for your sakes  
 Zion shall be ploughed like as a field,  
 And Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,  
 And the temple mount a wooded height."

According to S.R. Driver,<sup>1</sup> Micah's words of condemnation did not flow from his lips without being interrupted as well as unwelcomed. He informed his ungrateful hearers that it was not impatience on Jehovah's part that prompted Him to threaten his people, neither was punishment His chosen work as long as His people walk uprightly. He responds to them with friendly words and acts, the cause of His present unwanted attitude lies in you, who plunder mercilessly the unsuspecting and the unprotected; as a just retribution for the expulsion of others, you, the aggressors shall be expelled yourselves. Micah returns to the thought of 5:6: the only prophets to whom the people will listen are

<sup>1</sup>Driver, S.R., Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament p. 327.



those who hold out alluring, but deceitful promise of material enjoyment and prosperity.

Micah, though the prophet of the country and stern critic of its life, characterised Jerusalem herself as the center of the nation's sins. He did not refer to idolatry alone, but also to the irreligion of the politicians, and the cruel injustice of the rich in the capital. The poison which weakened the nation's blood had found its entrance to their veins at the very heart. There had the evil gathered which was shaking the state to a rapid dissolution.

#### b. THE GREAT REQUIREMENT

Micah, like his predecessors, after a general denunciation of the nation's corruption found it necessary to teach intensively the essentials of religion and what Jehovah required of his worshippers.

The prophetic conception of religion was not original with Micah; it was first presented by Amos and supplemented by his successors. The fundamental contrast between the popular religion and the religion of the true prophets is forcibly brought out in the sixth chapter of Micah. However, it is the opinion of many Old Testament scholars that Micah 6:1-8 is not from Micah of Moresheth,





for it presupposes some of the conditions of paganism that did not become common until the reign of Manasseh. Even though the actual words some claim may have come from a later disciple, it is certain that they voice the teachings of the peasant prophet from Moresheth. Soares thinks the people were really longing to secure the favor of the Deity and were expressing it as best they knew.

Possibly they had been moved to penitence as a result of the distressing experiences of 701 B.C., though retaining the old ceremonial conception of religion. They are represented as asking whether by the profusion of their offerings or even by the sacrifice of their dearest offspring can they again secure the favor of Jehovah; or as Kent puts it: "With what shall I come before Jehovah" or reading with Cheyne:

"Bringing what shall I come before Jehovah,  
Bow myself before the God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,  
With calves a year old?  
Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams,  
With myriads of streams of oil?  
Shall I give my first-born for my guilt,  
The fruits of my body for the sins of my soul?  
(6:6-8)

At this point the average mind was thinking in terms of tradition, viewing Jehovah as a king whose favor could be won with wealth of material gifts or by the evidence of self-denial on the part of his worshippers. But Micah answered the inquirers by merely chanting the essen-



tials of religion: bringing the primitive conception of religion into dramatic contrast with the new social ideals which the prophets of the Assyrian period had proclaimed. In his answer to the people's inquiry, he declares that what Jehovah demanded of the individual as well as of the nation was straight-forward living. This was not a new expression to Judah nor Israel, it was only a re-echo of the teachings of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah in different words. Charles F. Kent realizing that the expression was not new to the nations, paraphrases Micah 6:8 as follows:

"It has been shown thee O man what is good  
And what Jehovah demandeth of thee:  
Only do justice and love mercy,  
And walk humbly with God." (6:8)

The prophet shattered the fondest hope of his people ever coming into a rightful relation to Jehovah by material gifts of any kind. He laid his emphasis on the impartial practice of justice, the expression of love and tenderness toward others; that kind of justice, love and tenderness which express themselves in every thought and deed in dealing with others, whatever their position or standing may be.

From the prophetic point of view, religion was an internal something directing the life of the individual in such a way as to meet the approval of Jehovah. God does not demand sacrifices or material gifts, but moral and ethical conduct



The only sacrifice acceptable with Jehovah is that spoken of by the psalmist: "A soul with its evils crushed: a heart broken with penitence." (Psalm 51:17)

Micah succeeded in arousing the social conscience of the people of Judah even when Isaiah failed. His success was not due to originality, because for the most part he echoed the principles of his predecessors but it was due to the fact that he spoke from the view point of the common people, and with a simplicity and vigour and directness that were irresistible. Micah reaped where others had sown, and his simplicity in deliverance enabled him to drive home social principles already taught by earlier prophets.





SUMMARY  
and  
COMPARISON OF EIGHTH CENTURY PROBLEMS  
WITH PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS

The prophets were the crowning glory of Israel. They began their course amid the mists of the low-lying valleys; they ended it upon the sunlit mountain tops. The prophets were the distinguishing feature of Israel's life. Their greatest contribution to human thought was their vision of the righteous nature of God and of his demands of man. Their supreme abhorrence was unmoral religion.

The prophets set themselves the task of interpreting the history of their times in terms of God. The tragedies of Hebrew history challenged their best efforts yet they faced these problems courageously.

Since the close of the eighth century B.C. man has experienced a complete revolution. Old vocations have given way to new ones and in like manner old ideas have given way to new ones. In fact, so complete has been this revolution that there is but little left to compare. Especially is this true from a mechanical point of view - otherwise, there is much to compare.

Through the development of science, modern man has tunneled mountains, raised valleys, and bridged rivers. He



has learned the secret of nature so well that it is fast becoming his servant. Through his invention of the railroad, steam-boat, and aeroplane, peoples of other continents have become his next door neighbors and through his invention of the radio, he speaks and his voice is heard around the world.

Public speakers often use the expression, that through invention the world has decreased within the last few years from the size of a foot-ball to that of a peanut.

To say that we have made rapid progress along the mechanical and industrial lines since the eighth century B.C. is too obvious to demand proof. Yet from a social and spiritual point of view we have taken but few steps toward making this a better world. Although, some of the practices denounced by the prophets would be impossible in our civilization today; yet all about us we see the instruments and the most prominent agents of covetousness and cruelty; scant measure, false weights, corruption in public office, etc..

It must be remembered that the people to whom the prophets preached were very religious; and so are we. They built great temples in which to worship Jehovah without having His spirit; and we are doing likewise. The so-called sacred temples of the present century are so frozen with injustice and prejudice that they are abominations in the sight of God. Not only that, but they are enemies to real progress,



that is, if by progress we mean those acts which culminate in the attainment and practice of the principles of Jesus with all races of the earth. Since this country is said to be Christian, its so-called Christian churches, to a large degree are responsible for the world being held back in slavery to forms, ceremonies, unbrotherly customs and traditions; they forever deny to the people the abundant life they need.

In the eighth century B.C., man was burned as a sacrifice to the gods but today he is burned - at least in sections of the United States - for the satisfaction and pasttime of society. It is clearly demonstrated that much improvement remains yet to be done, especially from a social and spiritual point of view. But what of industry? In short we are forced to state that it too, needs to see the light. In America alone, nearly 2,000,000 children are forced into child labor.

No where do the unchristian aspects of our social order stand out so clearly as in the exploitation of children for selfish gain. The issue is so clear that it hardly seems necessary to say that the lust for profit on the part of those who are economically strong, or the compulsion of necessity on the part of those who are economically weak, drags undeveloped lives away from the home into ruthless





industrial machines.

This is utterly contrary to the principles of Him who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me." The effect of premature labor upon children is far-reaching; it militates against their future efficiency by leading them into occupations which train them for no occupations at all; because their present work, being of a character which can be done more cheaply by children, leads to their dismissal after a few years to make room for another group. Each successive group is left upon the industrial scrap-heap just when they reach maturity. Child-labor results also in dwarfed stature, and quite often in arrested mental as well as physical development.

Mr. Davis, Secretary of Labor says: "Approximately a million and a half of American boys and girls of school age are today thrown beneath the wheel of the juggernaut of industry, pressed to labor before their time, doomed to the drudgery of mind and factory by economic necessity. Before them stretches the tread-mill of unremunerative labor with a few years of heart-breaking soul-stirring toil and at the end a grave."

What of mothers? Their conditions are not better. It is estimated that 37% of mothers must toil or starve. One third or probably one half of the families of wage-



earners employed in manufacturing and mining, in the course of a year earn less than enough to support them comfortably. Therefore, of sheer necessity the mother is driven into industry.

The great task of the prophets was to work for human personality and the freedom of the individual, and if we would have present day society different from that of the eighth century, we must achieve the ideal for which the prophets labored.



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